

The Churchgoers Psalm

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[0 : 00] But if we could this evening with the Lord's help and the Lord's enabling, if we could turn back to that portion of scripture that we read in the book of Psalms and Psalm 1.

The book of Psalms and Psalm 1, as I said, I'd like us to go through the whole Psalm, but we'll just read again in verses 1 and 2. Blessed is the man who walks not in the council of the wicked, nor stands in the way of sinners, nor sits in the seat of scoffers, but his delight is in the law of the Lord, and on his law he meditates day and night.

In the day and age that we live in, it's safe to say that church attendance, it seems to be at an all-time low. Coming to church and attending church services, it's beginning to become a thing of the past, and every year the church senses it tells us that the church is in decline, and those who attend church are becoming fewer and fewer.

And even in our own island we can see that church, which used to be a vibrant part of community life, the church is now, you could say, in the minority.

But what's remarkable is that regardless of all the changes that have taken place in the last 50 years, with the promotion of liberalism and having open-minded views about sexuality or gender or tolerance, even with all these opinions and views being promoted in the 21st century, there still only remains two types of people in this world.

[1 : 43] We may look at our modern world and think that there are many different people with many different labels, and we may place them in all different sorts of categories according to their gender or their nationality or their age, their wealth, their sexuality, their location, or even their education.

We might put them all into different boxes and different categories. But the reality is that when the Lord looks at us, there are only two types of people in this world.

And that's because our Bible tells us that man looks on the outward appearance, but the Lord looks on the heart. And you know, that's what Psalm 1 presents to us.

It presents to us the two types of people in this world. And these two types of people are going in two different directions, and they will have two different outcomes.

But more than that, these two different types of people are to be found in church. Because if there are two different types of people out in the world, then there are only two different types of people in church.

[2 : 51] And I say all this because Psalm 1 is the church goer, Sam. Sam 1 is the church goer, Sam and Sam 1 presents to us the two types of people who come to church.

And this is because Sam 1, Sam 1 you could say is the introductory Sam to the book of Psalms. It comes along with Sam 2. Sam 2 is also an introductory Sam to the book of Psalms.

But Sam 1, it's the first Sam. It's not the first Sam that was written. We saw that in Sam 90. Sam 90 was the first Sam that was written, written by Moses.

But Sam 1 was intentionally placed here on the threshold of the book of Psalms to remind us that there are only two types of people who will sing from this book.

There are only two types of church goer who will use this prescribed book of praise. And Sam 1 tells us that they are either blessed or they are cursed.

[3 : 50] And you know, this is so solemn because at the outset of this book of praise, you're being asked, what kind of church goer are you?

What kind of worshipper are you? Are you blessed or are you cursed? And the reason one is blessed and the other is cursed is because one is in Christ and the other is in Adam.

One is saved, the other is in sin. One is redeemed, the other is in ruin. The one is holy, the other is hell bound. My friend Sam 1 is the church goer Sam.

And in it we're being confronted with two different people on two different paths going towards two different positions. And you are one of them.

You are one of them. And so I'd like us just to consider the church goer Sam this evening under three headings. The contrast, the comparison and the conclusion.

[4 : 51] The contrast, the comparison and the conclusion. So we'll look first of all at the contrast, the contrast, looking at verses one and two.

Blessed is the man who walks not in the council of the wicked, nor stands in the way of sinners, nor sits in the seat of scoffers, but his delight is in the law of the Lord.

And on his law he meditates day and night. This church goer Sam, it opens by setting before us a contrast, a contrast between the two types of people who attend church.

One is blessed, the other is cursed. And the first church goer that the Samist draws attention to is the blessed church goer. And that's how the Sam begins.

He says blessed is the man. Now I just want to linger there for a little moment because that opening statement is so beautiful. The Samist is describing a church goer as blessed.

[5 : 51] Blessed is the man. And this is beautiful because blessedness is a gift. Because to be blessed is to receive something that you don't deserve.

To be blessed is to be shown undeserved favour. To be blessed is to be graciously given a gift. That's what it means to be blessed.

You often hear people saying that they're blessed because they have many good things in life that make them happy. But that's not what it means to be blessed. That's not what true blessedness is. Because the word blessed or blessed, it literally means to kneel in the sense of kneeling before a king. And you're kneeling down before a king in submission.

And the image that the word blessed seeks to portray to us is the image of a king standing up from his throne. You could imagine the throne and the subject is there before him kneeling down.

[6 : 50] He's bowing himself under the king's authority and sovereignty. And he's kneeling before the king with his head bowed and his hand outstretched. And he's receiving from the gracious hand of the king something that he hasn't earned, something that he hasn't worked for, something that he doesn't deserve whatsoever.

And yet the king is graciously giving to him what he doesn't deserve. He's giving him this wonderful gift. And the psalmist is saying to us, that's what blessedness is.

That's what a blessed churchgoer looks like. He or she is the person who has humbly submitted their heart, their life, their authority, their will to the king.

And of course the king is King Jesus. And the undeserved gift that has been graciously given is the gift of salvation.

And you know, this is what makes the difference. This is what creates the contrast between the blessed man and the cursed man. Because my friend, the gracious provision of salvation from King Jesus is what makes all the difference.

[8 : 00] And what's remarkable is that the outworking of blessedness is that the blessed churchgoer lives their life completely different to the cursed churchgoer.

That's what the psalmist says. He says that the blessed churchgoer lives their life distinct and separate from the way of the cursed churchgoer. He says in verse one, blessed is the man who walks not in the council of the wicked, nor stands in the way of sinners, nor sits in the seat of scoffers.

The psalmist says that the blessed churchgoer who has come to know salvation through Jesus Christ, he says they no longer walk in the council of the wicked.

They don't live the way they used to when they were without grace. They don't take their advice and their guidance and their direction from the trends and fashions and fads of this world.

No, they delight in the law of the Lord, it says, and they meditate on that law day and night. They go to the Bible for their direction. But more than that, the blessed churchgoer, he says, doesn't stand in the way or in the path of sinners.

[9 : 13] They don't stand in that path that leads away from God and away from Christ and away from his word and away from his truth and away from his righteousness. No, the blessed churchgoer has separated himself from the path of temporary happiness and enjoyment and entertainment, a path that leads to destruction.

They've separated themselves from that. Why? Because as it says in verse two, their delight is in the law of the Lord. And on his law, he meditates day and night.

But there's still more because we're told that the blessed churchgoer doesn't sit in the seat of the scoffer. They have humbled their heart.

They have submitted their life. They have bowed their knee under the authority of King Jesus.

They're not proud of who they are and what they are and what they've achieved for themselves.

They don't sit self satisfied with all that they have, seeing that they have no need of King Jesus or a salvation. No, their hearts have been changed.

[10:16] Their life has been transformed. They have been forgiven. They're blessed. And because of this blessedness, their delight is in the law of the Lord and they meditate on his law day and night.

And you know, this is the greatest contrast between the blessed churchgoer and the cursed churchgoer. The blessed churchgoer delights in God's word.

They drink it in. They love the Bible. They enjoy being in church. They want to be in the Lord's house. They want to be with the Lord's people. They want to be singing these Psalms of praise to God.

But the cursed churchgoer. The cursed churchgoer is only in church out of a sense of duty, out of a sense of maybe routine. It's the Sunday thing.

Maybe they're here just to please someone else or to ease their own conscience. There's no delight in the Lord. There's no delight coming from the heart of the cursed churchgoer.

[11:21] There's only deadness. In fact, the heart of the cursed churchgoer, it isn't softening the more they come to church. Their heart is hardening.

And I say that because when it comes to the cursed churchgoer, we see that they only seem to be progressing in sin. Because what we see here is that the cursed churchgoer, he first of all walks in the council of the wicked.

Then he stands in the way of sinners. Then he sits in the seat of scoffers. The cursed churchgoer progresses in sin. They walk, they stand, they sit.

There's a progression all the time away from Jesus. But the psalmist says the blessed churchgoer does not do that. Their delight is in the law of the Lord. They meditate on that law day and night.

Their hope, their forgiveness, their salvation, their peace, their joy, their life. It all comes from the word of God. And they shape their life according to that word and not the council of the ungodly.

[12:29] They walk in the path of righteousness, not in the way of sinners. They sit at the table of the Lord, not with the seat of the scoffers. They delight in the Lord and His word.

And they humbly learn about this gracious King. And that's because the blessed churchgoer can see that everything they have received has been given to them by King Jesus.

And you know, all the time this churchgoer, Sam, is asking us, what kind of churchgoer are you? What kind of churchgoer are you?

Which one are you? Are you blessed or are you cursed? Are you in church tonight as someone who has humbly received this gracious act of salvation from the hand of King Jesus?

Or are you still saying tonight as you've been always have been saying, I will not have this man to rule over me? Which one are you?

[13:35] What kind of churchgoer are you? So there's the contrast, the contrast. But secondly, the comparison, the comparison, look at verses three and four.

It says, he is like a tree planted by streams of water that yields its fruit in its season and its leaf does not wither. In all that he does, he prospers.

The wicked are not so, but are like chaff that the wind drives away. And so having contrasted these two different churchgoers who are going in two different directions and will have two different outcomes, the psalmist now describes them further by making two comparisons.

He says that the blessed churchgoer is like a tree planted by a river, but the cursed churchgoer is like the chaff that the wind just drives away.

And so the blessed churchgoer is like a strong tree with solid roots that are grounded in Jesus Christ. They're strong and firm in Christ.

[14:46] And because they're in Christ, they draw all their nourishment and all their strength and all their vitality. They draw it from the river, the river of life, which is Jesus Christ.

As I know what Jesus said to the woman of Samaria, whoever drinks of the water that I will give him will never be thirsty again, because the water that I will give him will be in becoming him a spring of water welling up to eternal life.

And so for the blessed churchgoer, they will be like a tree planted by a river, stable, strong, and secure in Christ.

And they will bear fruit. There will be evidence in the life of the blessed churchgoer. They will be evidence because they're being blessed by King Jesus.

And they've been blessed with every spiritual blessing in heavenly places in Christ. But you know what's remarkable is that that blessedness enables the churchgoer to be fruitful in every season of life.

[15 : 55] Because like a tree planted by a river, the blessed churchgoer must endure all the seasons.

As you know, my Christian friend here tonight, not every season in the life of a believer is like spring with renewed life and strength.

Because there will always come the season of the hot summer where there is temptation and there is trial. Then there will come another season where the autumn comes in and there will be changes. And these changes in that season of your life, they'll bring different colors, some brighter, some darker, some with joy, some with sorrow, some with addition, some with loss.

Time always brings change. There will be change in circumstances, change in life, change in family, change in health. And these changes, they're often followed by the long cold, dark nights of winter where there's loneliness and isolation, sometimes little growth and little nourishment.

[17 : 03] But you know what's so beautiful is that regardless of the season, the roots are still in the river.

The roots are still drawing from the river all year round. My Christian friend, whether it's spring, summer, autumn or winter in your life, Jesus is still supplying all your necessary nourishment.

That's his promise. He'll supply all your needs according to his riches and glory by Christ Jesus. And is it not true that with every passing season, your roots, they become stronger and they go deeper into the river?

You become more grounded, more secure, more firm, more fruitful. Because were it not for the river, you would wither and die. Were it not for Jesus to draw upon, there would be no life.

Were it not for Jesus, you as a blessed churchgoer, you couldn't be fruitful in every season of your life. And you know, I love that wonderful reminder that we were singing about in Psalm 92.

[18 : 14] As I said, Psalm 92, it's the Psalm that was to be sung on the Sabbath day. And didn't we have the reminder of the Christian who is grounded, firm and deep in the Savior's love and that even though the Christian may have to go through many seasons of life, they can still draw upon that nourishment from the river of life, Jesus Christ.

And in Psalm 92, the Sammet was describing the Christian as this flourishing pampy and like the tall cedar trees of Lebanon.

And he says, those that within the house of God are planted by his grace. They shall grow up and flourish all in our God's holy place.

But as we saw, the Sammet doesn't leave it there because then he speaks about older Christians, those who are maybe in the congregation and their housebound or they're in the care home as I was there this afternoon.

Their roots are deep in the river and they've been drawing upon the Lord for many years. And yet the Sammet says about them and in old age, when others fade, they fruit still forth shall bring, they shall be fat and full of sap and a be flourishing.

[19 : 34] My Christian friend, despite all the seasons of life that you might have had to go through, you can say that you have a faithful constant that will never change.

He will never change. You have this constant supply of life giving water flowing to you from your King and fountain head, Jesus Christ.

And because of him, you have life. Because of him, you have peace with God. Because of him, you have assurance of salvation. Because of him, you have stability and security. Because of him, you have the hope of glory.

Because of him, you have the unshakable promises of God's word. Because of him, you have the presence of God's spirit with you every single day. Because of him, you have the promise that you

will never be separated from the love of Christ.

Because of him, you are blessed. You are blessed. Blessed with every spiritual blessing in heavenly places in Christ.

[20 : 35] You as a blessed churchgoer are like a tree planted by a river. But he doesn't stop there.

The Sammet then turns to the cursed churchgoer. And look what he says about the cursed churchgoer in verse 4. The wicked are not so, but are like chaff that the wind drives away.

The wicked are not so. The wicked person, the cursed person, they are the unconverted churchgoer who's still in Adam, still in their sin, still in ruin, still without Christ, still without hope, still walking in the council of the wicked, still standing in the path of sin, or still sitting among the seat of scoffers.

And now by all intents and purposes, this unconverted churchgoer, when we see them, they're nice people, they're moral people. They're warm and friendly people. They look the part, they act the part.

They participate in the service. They sing the Psalms. They read the scriptures. They listen to the sermon. But as we said, man looks on the outward. The Lord looks on the heart.

[21 : 55] And what this churchgoer's Sam is reminding us, it's not about what we see. It's about what the Lord sees. And the Sammet is giving to us an accurate description of the cursed churchgoer.

Because when we ask about the cursed churchgoer, when we say about them, maybe you, if we could describe you, are they blessed? The Sammet says, not so.

Are they saved? Not so. Are they forgiven? Not so. Are they washed? Not so. Are they righteous? Not so. Are they fruitful? Not so. Are they flourishing? Not so. Are they secure in Christ? Not so. Are they rooted and grounded in Christ?

Not so. Do they have peace in life? Not so. Do they have hope and death? Not so. He says, not so. Not so. Not so.

[22 : 56] The wicked are not so. And if they're not like the three planted by a river, grounded, firm and deep in the Savior's love, then what are they like?

And the Sammet says they are like chaff, that the wind just drives away. They have no stability. They have no security. They have no safety. You know, it's a solemn, solemn illustration because the useless chaff that was separated from the wheat, it's often mentioned in the Bible.

And when it's mentioned in the Bible, it's always mentioned in relation to God's judgment. And that was the case with John the Baptist. He was preaching to the churchgoers of his day, and he was preaching to these people about the arrival of King Jesus.

And John the Baptist, he proclaimed to them, he said to them, King Jesus will come with a winnowing fork in his hand, and he will clear out the threshing floor and gather the wheat into his barn.

[24 : 06] But he says he will burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire. My friend, this churchgoer, Sam, is solemnly reminding us that the churchgoer who is still unconverted, still in Adam, still in their sin, still in ruin, still without Christ, still without hope, still walking according to the counsel of the wicked, still standing in the way of sinners, still sitting in the seat of scoffers, that churchgoer is like the chaff that the wind drives away into the unquenchable fire.

And yet all the time this Sam is asking us, what kind of churchgoer are you? What kind of churchgoer are you?

Are you blessed or are you cursed? Are you wheat or are you chaff? Are you in Christ or are you in Adam? Are you saved or are you in sin? Are you redeemed or in ruin?

Are you holy or are you hellbound? What kind of churchgoer are you? What kind of churchgoer are you?

Because you are one of them. But let us hear the conclusion of the matter. To contrast the comparison and lastly and briefly the conclusion.

[25 : 30] The conclusion verses 5 and 6. Therefore the wicked will not stand in the judgment, nor sinners in the congregation of the righteous, for the Lord knows the way of the righteous, but the way of the wicked will perish.

This churchgoer Sam, it concludes with the outcome of these two different types of churchgoer. And it concludes when they appear at the judgment seat of Christ.

The Psalmist says at the beginning of verse 5 that the wicked will not stand in the judgment. Now that doesn't mean that they won't appear before the judgment seat of Christ.

They will appear. The Bible is very clear that they will appear before Christ at the last judgment. Because your Bible will tell you that it is appointed unto man once to die and after that the judgment.

And that all must appear before the judgment seat of Christ and give an account. But when the cursed churchgoer appear at the judgment seat of Christ, they will not stand as righteous in God's sight.

[26 : 45] They will be pronounced guilty of their sin and they will be condemned to hell for all eternity. And they're condemned to hell not because God didn't save them, but because they refused to accept this gracious gift of salvation from the hand of the King.

And you know what's so awful about the conclusion of this churchgoer Sam is that it not only emphasizes that the cursed churchgoer will not be able to stand in God's judgment.

It also says that they will be separated from God's people. We're told that they will not stand in the congregation of the righteous.

In other words, churchgoers will be separated. They may have come from the same family.

They may have walked through the same church door. They may have sat in the same church pew.

They may have read and sung the same Psalms. They may have read the same Bible.

[27 : 50] They may have heard the same sermon. But churchgoers will be separated on the day of judgment.

And you know, looking out at many of you this evening, I know where some of you stand. I don't know where all of you stand.

And I'd like to think what that separation will be like on the day of judgment. And my unconverted churchgoer here tonight, you can't say to me on the day of judgment that I never told you.

You can't say that I never warned you. You can't say that I never pleaded with you. Because you know that my longing for you as it is for everyone under the sound of the gospel is that you'll be saved.

But you'll never be saved if you don't do anything about it. You'll never be saved. You'll never have peace in life and hope and death if you don't turn away from your sin and turn to Jesus for your salvation.

[29 : 02] You'll never be saved if you don't earnestly ask Jesus to save you. You'll never be saved if you don't commit your life to Jesus Christ.

You'll never be saved if you do nothing about it. And you know, that's the warning that this churchgoer, Sam, concludes with in verse 6, the Lord knows the way of the righteous, but the way of the wicked will perish.

The churchgoer, Sam, it concludes by affirming the direction of those who are blessed and those who are cursed. Because the Lord knows the way of the righteous. The way of the righteous is everlasting life.

The way of the righteous is life eternal, but the way of the wicked is eternal death. My friend, there are only two types of people in this world.

And there are only two types of people who come to church. And these two different people are on two different paths, and they are going towards two different positions.

[30 : 01] And you are one of them. You are one of them. And this churchgoer, Sam, is asking you tonight, what kind of churchgoer are you?

You may have been sitting in this church all your life, but what kind of churchgoer are you? Are you blessed or are you cursed?

Are you in Christ or are you in Adam? Are you saved or are you lost? Are you redeemed or are you in ruin? Are you heaven bound or are you hell bound?

What kind of churchgoer are you? That's a question I'll leave you with this evening. What kind of churchgoer are you?

May the Lord bless these thoughts to us. Let us pray. O Lord our gracious God, may we give thanks to you that the Lord our God who speaks to us and the Lord one who speaks to us sometimes so directly, we pray that we would hear thy voice, that we would heed the warning, that we would seek the Lord while he is to be found and call upon him while he is near, or that we would leave this place different to the way we came in, that we would see Jesus Christ passing by in the Gospel,

that we would look to him, that we would lean upon him, that we would love him with all our heart.
[31 : 39] Lord we thank thee that he is a gracious King who gives to us the promise of eternal life when we ask for it. Help us then to ask that we might receive, help us to seek that we might find, help us Lord to knock, that the door may open to us, O Lord that we might walk in and find life eternal.

Bless us Lord we pray, keep us on Mursh's ground until we find thee, and go before us for Jesus' sake. Amen.

Well we shall bring our service to a conclusion this evening by singing Sam 1, Sam 1 in the singing Sam's version, we'll sing the whole Sam, blessed is the one who turns away from where the wicked walk, who does not stand in sinners paths or sit with those who mock.

And he finds God's holy law, his joy and great delight, he makes the precepts of the Lord his study, dear night. The whole Sam to God's place.

And he finds God's holy law, his joy and great delight, he makes the precepts of the Lord his study, he makes the precepts of the Lord his study, he makes the precepts of the Lord his study, dear night.

[33 : 47] He prospers ever like a tree, that's by the cross, he makes the precepts of the Lord like a tree, that's planted by a stream, and in juiciness yields its fruit, its leaves are always green.

No soul the wicked, they are like the chaff that's blew lowly, they will not stand when judgment comes, or with the righteous stays.

In this the Lord who sees and knows, the way the righteous go, but those who live by the law are not blind, evil like the Lord well overthrown.

The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God the Father, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all, now and forevermore. Amen.