

Happy is The Man

Psalm 1 - 2

Ps 1:1 "Blessed [Happy] is the man¹ who walks not in the counsel of the wicked, nor stands in the way of sinners, nor sits in the seat of scoffers;
² but his delight is in the law of the LORD, and on his law he meditates day and night.
³ 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.
⁴ The wicked are not so, but are like chaff that the wind drives away.
⁵ Therefore the wicked will not stand in the judgment, nor sinners in the congregation of the righteous;
⁶ for the LORD knows the way of the righteous, but the way of the wicked will perish."

Ps 2:1 "Why do the nations rage and the peoples plot in vain?
² The kings of the earth set themselves, and the rulers take counsel together, against the LORD and against his Anointed, saying,
³ "Let us burst their bonds apart and cast away their cords

¹ "Oh the blessings of the man ..." Robert L. Cole, "(Mis)Translating Psalm 1," *Journal for Biblical Manhood and Womanhood* 10, no. 2 (2005): 46 [35-46]. "Happy" is technically a masculine plural construct, while "the man" is an articular ("the") masculine singular. The Plural is found in the YLT's, "The happiness of the one," but "the one" reflects a presupposition of interpreting this Psalm non-Messianically. That is what Cole's article is all about.

- from us."
- ⁴ He who **sits** in the heavens laughs; the Lord holds them in derision.
- ⁵ Then he will speak to them in his wrath, and terrify them in his fury, saying,
- ⁶ "As for me, I have set my King **on** Zion, my holy hill."
- ⁷ I will tell of the decree: The LORD said to me, "You are my Son; **today** I have begotten you.
- ⁸ Ask of me, and I will **make** the nations your heritage, and the ends of the earth your possession.
- ⁹ You shall break them with a rod of iron and dash them in pieces like a potter's vessel."
- ¹⁰ **Now** therefore, O kings, be wise; be warned, **O rulers [judges] of the earth.**
- ¹¹ Serve the LORD with fear, and rejoice with trembling.
- ¹² Kiss the Son, lest he be angry, and you **perish** in the **way**, for his wrath is quickly kindled. **Blessed** [Happy] are **all** who take refuge in him."

Psalm 1:1-6
Psalm 2:1-12

Psalms

THE BOOK OF PSALMS. Beloved by Jews and Christians for 3,000 years, they describe virtually every emotion and life situation a human being can have in this life, but do so in the context of what it means to be a godly in an evil

generation, therefore teaching us how to respond properly to anything God puts in our path. Our English word “psalm” comes from the Greek *psalmos*, meaning a “a song accompanied by a stringed instrument; song.”² This is the word the Greek speaking Jews of the Septuagint (LXX) used to translate the word *mizmor*, “a melody, song, psalm.” And so it is no wonder that the Psalms have been so loved. Unlike much of much of the biblical text (some portions of the prophets and songs like those of Moses, Hannah, and Mary excluded), these are words were written and given to the people in such a way so as to touch not merely the mind, but the memory and the heart.

How were they used back in the day? As songs, they formed the soul of *temple worship* in the Old Testament, which later developed a very high functioning center for writing and conducting the music of the temple service through the sons of Asaph, who also composed a portion of the psalter itself (see *Ps. 73-83*). We read that “David also commanded the chiefs of the Levites to appoint their brothers as the singers who should play loudly on musical

² In *Richard Clifford*, “Psalms 1-72,” in *Abingdon Old Testament Commentaries* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 2002), 15.

instruments, on harps and lyres, and cymbals, to raise sounds of joy” (1Ch 15:16). The three main original singing Levites were Ethan, Asaph, and my personal favorite, Heman (17, 19). According to the Apostle Paul, singing such songs exists for the purpose of “letting the word of Christ dwell in your richly,” for “teaching” and for “admonishing one another in all wisdom,” and doing so with “thankfulness in your hearts to God” (Col 3:16).

The Reformers and Puritans loved the psalms so much that they decided to turn them all into English rhymes and composed their music that reflected their own cultural sensibilities.³ This tradition goes back to the ancient church which turned the Psalms into the *lingua franca* of their day, as

³ **Going Deeper.** Many of the Puritans associated instruments with temple worship rather than with the meaning of “psalm” itself, and incorrectly concluded that instruments in music is something that has passed away with the old covenant (made all the more incorrect given all the the NT has to say about the present-day temple of God). A few traditions such as the Covenanters or Reformed Presbyterians continue to this day as a cappella only in worship. These same groups are also Psalms only, as they take their view of the Reformed Regulative Principle to such a degree that we are only commanded to actually sing the biblical Psalter in the Bible (which simply isn’t true, for example see the end of Habakkuk. Some might point to a verse like Col 3:16 above as proof that the NT commands other even “new songs” to be sung [see also Rev 5:9; 14:3]. The RP argument is that “psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs” refer to the three main types of psalms in the psalter, and not to new music. This claim is far from certain. The NT still has a temple, and in this temple we are commanded to sing songs to God. The Bible is full of songs outside of the psalter. All this said, at the very least, our songs should include the full psalter if we have them available to sing in our language. They are inspired by God himself.

they composed haunting Latin chants from them. In more recent days, it was popular to take little portions of from the psalms and turn them into simple choruses, a practice neither good nor bad in itself, yet requiring much wisdom so as to not wrench the lyric from its original context, thereby teaching incorrect doctrine. This has since given way to a several attempts to recast entire psalms and even the full psalter itself to meet the musical needs of a new generation of people.⁴ It is a day to rejoice when God's people rediscover the full inspired songs of the holy psalter and desire to sing them fresh and new.

From the very beginning, Christians have preached through and commented on the Psalms. It is one of the richest sources of Church Father commentaries that we have. Obviously, the Reformers and Puritans with their love of singing them follow in this tradition, having much to say about the Psalms. Modern commentaries on the

⁴ For example the musical group *My Soul Among Lions* out of Indiana is on their second Kickstarter campaign, as they make their way to producing new music and lyrics to all 150 psalms. Unfortunately, the way they are composing these psalms makes them difficult to sing in corporate worship. https://www.kickstarter.com/projects/mysoulamonglions/my-soul-among-lions-psalms-1120?ref=user_menu.

Psalms are plentiful as well. And so everyone has an opinion on the Psalms.

What are yours? How do you use them? Do you use them devotionally, perhaps to assist you through those dark times or to help you worship in the good times? Are they merely personal for you?

Who are the Psalms about? I sometimes worry about contemporary church music because it seems that every line is “I” or “me.” I wondered about the Psalms. I did a search in the ESV and discovered that out of around 2,500 total verses in the Psalms,⁵ “I” or “me” appeared in more than 2/5 of those verses.⁶ So clearly, it is appropriate to [personalize](#) the Psalms.

But the Psalms are also [corporate](#), with all of them being sung in the public worship of the corporate people of God. They used them in ceremonies, feasts, laments, the enthronement of the king of Israel, to praise together, in liturgy, in ascending the steps of the temple, and so on. In that light, I discovered that “we” and “us” appeared in over

⁵ There are 2,461 total verses in 150 Psalms (with an additional 137 “verses” that are not numbered, but act as inspired introductions or markers within the Psalms).

⁶ “I” in the ESV of the Psalms occur 786 times in 556 verses. “Me” appears 660 times in 453 verses.

200 verses in the Psalms.⁷ How can their corporate nature help us together in our day?

Continuing on this theme of who the Psalms are about, the pronoun that appeared in the most verses was not about “us” or “me.” It is the pronoun “**you.**”⁸ And my guess is that “you” refers in the overwhelming majority of verses – to God. The Psalms are also songs written and sung to God, not just us. In fact, the Psalms are even written *about* God. I want us to explore this just a bit more, because I wonder what you hear when I say this.

The Psalms were **written by men** and **inspired by God**. As Christians, we know that our God is not a monad, not a “oneism.” God is triune: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. He has always existed this way. But some, dare I say many, have this impression that the Triune God is the invention of the NT Apostles and/or that none of the people in the OT wrote this way or could have possibly known that God is like this. Thus, perhaps thinking only of the human authorship, the first impulse always seems to be to go to some kind of a

⁷ “Us” appears 127 times in 94 verses. “We” occurs 79 times in 61 verses.

⁸ “you” 882 times in 614 verses. “They” appears 399 times in 311 verses. “Them” 301 times in 233 verses.

human-only context, even in so-called “Messianic” psalms. “Well, that is about David,” people say, “And the NT simply changed the meaning and interpreted it the light of their own context.” This is a dangerous move that seems to open the door to making the Psalms say whatever you want them to say in your own context. But it rests on this skepticism of how they could write about this kind of a God, who is Father and a Son and a Holy Spirit?

There are two answers to this. The first is that the Psalms are also inspired by God. They are “God-breathed,” as the Holy Spirit superintended them. God knows full well what he is like. As such, the God who inspired the Psalms is the *Triune* God. If the Psalms are about him, and if he inspired them, we have to understand that this is not a selfish inspiration as if holding The One up on a pedestal. Rather, it is a giving inspiration to glorify Each Other when they talk about him.

But I want to say even more. I’m fully persuaded that the human authors knew God to be One God but in more than one Person. David, for instance, refers to the LORD,

but also to his Lord (**Ps 110:1**).⁹ Yet, he is the king of Israel. He has no Lord over him, unless that Lord is also God. But how can there be two Lords? Jesus said he was talking about him. No, they didn't use the technical term "trinity" to describe him. But they knew Persons in a Godhead nonetheless.

This leads me to **the way I want to take us through the Psalms**. I debated whether to just take highlights of Psalms or to do a few and then quit for a while or to go through them all. There are problems and benefits to each, but a main problem with the last one is that we could potentially be in the Psalms for the rest of my life. And I would like to preach other books before I die.

Then I stumbled upon an article that begins this way, **"I operate under the assumption that the Psalter is a unified**

⁹ I've said that many do not see Christ in the Psalms, because they can't understand how the Trinity could be there. I've also just quoted Psalm 110:1 and in a moment we will look at Ps 2. Unfortunately, this thought of Christ actually being in the Psalms originally is foreign, even to Reformed people (and Reformed people who should know better). For example, **"Ridderbos also deals with the question of the Messianic expectation that comes to expression in the psalms. His view is that with the exception of psalm 110 not one psalm is directly Messianic. According to Ridderbos the poets of psalms 2, 72, and the like focus their attention on that to which the king of Israel is entitled; they have before their eyes what the king could be and ought to be. Later on these psalms were applied to the Messiah, and rightly so."** **Sierd Woudstra**, "Review of De Psalmen, Eerste Deel, Psalm 1–41 (in: Korte Verklaring Der Heilige Schrift) by Nic. H. Ridderbos," *Westminster Theological Journal* 26, no. 2 (1963): 175.

text and, consequently, should be read as such—that is, with a storyline and a literary context.”¹⁰ The context for me came as I was thinking about preaching the first Psalm. I had already run across a number of articles that discuss how Psalm 1 and 2 are actually meant to be read together, and how going back for millennia people have noticed this.¹¹ I had never noticed it, at least not with these Psalms.

Then something struck me. Psalm 2 is one of the most quoted Psalms in the NT (at least a dozen times).¹² Why? Because its focus is the chief message of the NT. Jesus—the only begotten Son of God is here in the Psalm. But if Psalm 2 is like this and is meant to be read with Psalm 1, then what does this mean? And if these are the first two Psalms in a Psalter that actually has a plot and a storyline, then what does that mean?

This takes us to something we need to realize about the Book of Psalms. These are not just 150 randomly placed

¹⁰ Michael K. Snearly, *The Return of the King: Messianic Expectation in Book V of the Psalter* (London: Bloomsbury Publishing, 2015), 79.

¹¹ The Dead Sea Scrolls interpret the two together (4Q174 Col. Iii:14; 4Q174 Frags. 1 I, 21, 2:14).

¹² Ps 2:1—Rev 11:18; Ps 2:1-2—Acts 4:25-26; Ps 2:2—Rev 19:19; Ps 2:7—Mat 3:17 and 17:15 and Mark 1:11 and 9:7; Ps 2:8—Heb 1:2; Ps 2:8-9—Rev 2:26-27; Ps 2:9—Rev 12:5 and 19:15; Ps 2:11—Php 2:12.

pieces of poetry. They are deliberately organized into a single book. You see this in your Bibles: There are **five books** that compose the full Book of Psalms. The Rabbis said that this is a deliberate reflection on the first five books of the Bible (the Pentateuch).¹³ The Torah's purpose is for instruction, and the very first Psalm says the same thing (**Ps 1:2**).

Book 1 is **Psalms 1-41**; Book 2 is **Psalms 42-72**; Book 3 is **Psalms 73-89**; Book 4 is **Psalm 90-106**; and book five is **Psalm 107-150**. David is said to be the author of all but four of the Psalms in Book 1 (**1, 2, 10, and 33**). However, **Acts 4:25** says that David wrote Psalm 2, and probably therefore Psalm 1.

Altogether, David is the author of 73 Psalms (75 when you add two non-attributed Psalms attributed to **David** in the NT, see **Ps 95** and **Heb 4:7**). Most of these are grouped together at various parts of the psalter (**1-41; 51-65; 68-70; 108-110; 138-145**). Many of David's psalms come straight out of his life and these are also grouped together (especially most of **51-63**).

¹³ **Mark David Futato**, *Interpreting the Psalms: An Exegetical Handbook* (Grand Rapids: Kregel Academic, 2007), 63.

Asaph and his family wrote 12. These are also grouped together (50; 73-83). The sons of Korah wrote 11 of them which are again grouped together (44-49; 84-88 minus 86). Solomon wrote two (72 and 127). Heman (88), Moses (90), and Ethan (89) each wrote one. 48 are anonymous. This puts the timeframe of composition of the psalter at well over 1,000 years! (Moses to Ezra's lifetime). This compilation of the psalter thus was probably overseen by Ezra. And like our own hymnal which is arranged thematically, it had a purpose. Today I was to show us through Psalms 1-2 what that purpose is.

Psalm 1

“The Psalm of Psalms,” Spurgeon called it.¹⁴ Psalm 1 begins, as Ambrose says, with “a delightfully apt beginning!” (Ambrose, *Commentary on Twelve Psalms 1.13*), with the word “Blessed,” or since many don't know the meaning of blessed,¹⁵ “Happy!” This is the word that sprang off the lips of Leah when her concubine gave birth to her last

¹⁴ C. H. Spurgeon, *The Treasury of David: Psalms 1-26*, vol. 1 (London; Edinburgh; New York: Marshall Brothers, n.d.), 4.

¹⁵ “Blissfully happy.” Futato, 64.

child. The word is *asher*, the eighth son of Jacob, taking us back to Genesis. It describes an objective state of well-being with God, but it is also marked by an emotional state of happiness. Yet, the feelings are being driven by the objective state. The emotions fall in line with the reality of what is, so that no matter what the circumstance in life, you can rejoice.

Psalm 1 is a reflection on the Law, and if the five books of the Psalter are a reflection on the Law, it is curious that they start the same way a later sermon on the law begins: This is the Sermon on the Mount and its famous Beatitudes. “Blessed are...” That sermon was preached by Jesus. Ambrose makes an interesting connection, “[Our Lord Jesus] promises us the glory of a heavenly kingdom, the sweetness of everlasting rest, the happiness of eternal life.” Indeed, as we will see, happiness here is the result of loving and doing God’s law.

The Psalm is divided into three sections of three, two, and one verse.¹⁶ The first three describe the happy man. The two contrast him with the wicked. The final verse summarizes by contrasting them again. Both men are what

¹⁶ See the outline at the end of the sermon.

they are in relation to God's law.

The Righteous Man (1:1-3)

First, let's look at the happy man. Why is he happy? Why is he blessed? The answer reveals **the key** found throughout the whole Bible for how you can be in this state of mind and soul. It is a key that will unlock a door later on. It answers, because he does not “**walk**” in the counsel of the wicked, nor “**stand**” in the way of sinners, nor “**sit**” in the seat of scoffers (**Ps 1:1**). Who are the wicked, the sinners, and the scoffers? They are people who hate God and his law. Their hands act perversely. Their feet rebel against Authority. Their mouths mock mightily. They do so individually. They do so as an assembly.

The wicked love to **gather others around them** who are just like them. Misery loves company. Fools feast with other fools. It is the “**counsel**” of the wicked. Most evils are not hatched alone, but in groups, deliberately, deliberatively, in counsel. It is why politics of most any kind is so often evil. Notice Psalm 2, “**Why do the nations rage and the peoples plot in vain? The kings of the earth set themselves, and the**

rulers take counsel together...” (2:1-2). Both Psalms begin with wicked counsels.¹⁷

But there is a trajectory going on here as well. The verbs are “walk,” stand,” and “sit.” It is a movement from bad to worse, from kind of gleeful sauntering in sin to stagnation in a stale stew of sewage. But it is the whole life-cycle of it in mind. Sin is never motionless. It *must* degenerate, must devolve, must decline downward. To sin is to fall and keep on falling. At first is a kind of careless matter of practicality, as Spurgeon put it. It is a kind of dabbling, not too serious, just playing around with it, thinking on it, wondering about it, talking together over it, walking.

Then it becomes habituated. You stand. You stop. You start looking at those around you doing the thing you were mulling over. You notice them. It doesn't seem so bad. You contemplate now. You deliberate. You fixate. You obsess.

Finally, you plop yourself down in the mire and muck. You sit in the very seat of the scornful. You become enthroned ... in your sin. This seat engulfs you, it sucks you down. You become submerged, surrounded, stuck, even as

¹⁷ While conceptually the same, the Hebrew (*etsab, yasad*) and Greek (*boulē, sunagō*) words are different.

the praises of your fellows whom you have conspired together with and stood happily watching heap adoration upon you. Sinners love to congratulate each other in their sin. The progression is complete; you will not be moved. Happy is the man who does not downwardly progress in sin with the wicked. If you have ever done this, you know that the Psalmist is correct. For such things make the Christian utterly miserable and give him a feeling of curse rather than well-being, blessedness, and happiness.

In good Hebrew poetic fashion, an opposite immediately presents itself. What is the solution to such activity with sinners? “But his delight is in the law of the LORD, and on his law he meditates day and night” (1:2). Rather than walking, standing, and sitting, you **delight** and **meditate**. Rather than with sinners, it is with Torah. Torah means “instruction, teaching, direction.” It is translated, however, as “**law**.” In **Deuteronomy 4:6** and many Psalms and Proverbs, it is the embodiment of **Wisdom**.¹⁸ In Psalm

¹⁸ In fact, it actually replaced wisdom as a hypostasis in rabbinic literature. See. **C. L. Seow**, “Torah,” ed. Karel van der Toorn, Bob Becking, and Pieter W. van der Horst, *Dictionary of Deities and Demons in the Bible* (Leiden; Boston; Köln; Grand Rapids, MI; Cambridge: Brill; Eerdmans, 1999), 874-75. This helps explain why Jesus is so angry at the Pharisees for thinking that the Scripture leads them to eternal life, when they forget Him who is Wisdom.

119, rather it takes the place of “God’s face” (*panim*), as the psalmist says, “Hide not your commandments from me” (Ps 119:19). And often, *torah* is parallel with God’s “word” (Isa 2:3) and his *memra* (Isa 5:24). Let these tantalizing thoughts sit in your mind and we will return to it in due course, for this is our key.

This is God’s law, or more literally, Yahweh’s Law. We are introduced to the formal name Yahweh here (LORD in all caps). It is not just any law, as if meditating on the 52 volumes of U.S. Law code all the live-long day would delight anyone but a masochist. This is the law of I AM WHO I AM, the Eternal, Unchanging, Omnipotent God.

But his law makes us *happy*. How can law make anyone happy? Spurgeon said:

He is not *under* the law as a curse and condemnation, but he is *in* it, and he delights to be in it as his rule of life; he delights, moreover, to *meditate* in it, to read it *by day*, and think upon it *by night*. He takes a text and carries it with him all day long; and in the night-watches, when sleep forsakes his eyelids, he museth upon the Word of God. In the *day* of his prosperity he sings *psalms* out of the Word of God, and

in the *night* of his affliction he comforts himself with *promises* out of the same book. “The law of the Lord” is the daily bread of the true believer.¹⁹

This really begs a question. Is your delight in the law of God? Do you meditate on it day and night? Do you read it? Do you memorize it? Do you ponder it? Does it go with you when you walk? Do you stand by it? Do you sit at home and study it? Is it like your best friend? Is it with you when you wake and when you lay down to sleep? Is it a light to your feet? Do you love what he has told you to do? Is it a dreadful thought to be commanded and told to do things by the LORD?

Most people don't even know the most basics of God's Law, let alone love it. How can you ponder something that you don't even know? What are the Ten Commandments? What is the Golden Rule? What is the summary of the law of God? Everyone knows what is right and wrong, but the conscience is a terrible mediator of the law, as you can convince yourself of almost anything if you violate it long

¹⁹ C. H. Spurgeon, *The Treasury of David: Psalms 1-26*, vol. 1 (London; Edinburgh; New York: Marshall Brothers, n.d.), 2.

enough.

Many religious people seem profoundly unhappy all the time. Yet, they talk about “laws” in their legalism. On the other hand, many who couldn’t care less about the law of God seem blissfully content and happy. The legalist is often not meditating on God’s law, but on his own. He just makes them up, and they make his countenance fall. He forces his own laws onto others, in order to avoid the pain of his own rejection of God’s law. The blissfully content person is actually lying, if not to himself then at least to you. He isn’t content living in the misery of his sin. She doesn’t enjoy all the repercussions that her sin has brought in her life. But she sure can make you think it doesn’t bother her. He can even make himself think it really doesn’t. This is a frightening position to be in.

But the psalmist goes a different direction with these questions, at least for now (he will raise them throughout the psalter). The one who meditates and delights in the law 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” (3). Along with “day” and “night” (vs. 2), this tree should remind you of Genesis again. It is no accident

that the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil and the Tree of Life were in Paradise and that they were trees planted by God. A tree of law and a tree of life.²⁰

The Trinity

Thus, notice that the tree is not wild grown. It is planted. At this point, we start getting some very interesting hints that God is triune. We know that God is the planter. But Jesus takes this verse and says that the **Father** is the Planter. “Every plant, which my heavenly Father has not planted, will be rooted up” (**Matt 15:13**). This verse is also linked to later in the Psalm with the judgment that is coming.

In the OT, the Jews were God’s planted vine (**Isa 5:1-7**). In the NT, Christians are the branches. Closely related is

²⁰ We’ll see much more of this when we come to **Psalm 19**. Here, consider a parallel to Psalm 1 which is found in ancient Egyptian temple literature: “As for the heated man in the temple | He is like a tree growing indoors | A moment lasts its growth of shoots. | Its end comes about in the woodshed | It is floated far from its place | The flame is its burial shroud. | The truly silent, who keeps apart | He is like a tree grown in a meadow. | It greens, it doubles its yield, | It stands in front of its lord. | Its fruit is sweet, its shade delightful, | Its end comes in the garden.” (*Instruction of Amenemope* 1.47.4). In **William W. Hallo** and K. Lawson Younger, *The Context of Scripture* (Leiden; New York: Brill, 1997–), 117.

Israel as the fig tree (**Hos 9:10**; **Matt 21:19-21**; **Luke 13:6**). Figs, of course, are what our parents covered themselves with in Eden. Now, **Jesus** is particularly called the tree, even the Tree of Life (**Prov 3:18**; **Rev 2:7**). He is the Branch of Jesse. He is the Vine. And So on. If we don't see this, we are not reading the OT with the NT, or even with the OT itself.

This tree of the psalm is not planted in a wilderness or a waste. This ground is by streams of water. The water is also an image of **Christ**, who gives Living Water (**John 4:10**). He guides to springs of living water (**Rev 7:17**). This image begins in Eden and goes right on through to the last chapter of Revelation. “**There is a river whose streams make glad the city of God, the holy habitation of the Most High**” (**Ps 46:4**). It is a temple picture with God in the midst (**46:5**). Again, it is Eden as its rivers. It is “**the river of God**” (**Ps 65:9-10**). The Christian is baptized into Christ's death. He gives us his Word which “washes” us with Living Water.

The tree is alive. It is not dead. This refers to spiritual life and spiritual death, a theme that will come up again in a moment. But for now, it is enough to see that if the blessed man is a tree, he is a living tree. The Christian heart is fertile ground for God's law to be planted. Not barren and sterile

clay dirt, but rich topsoil carefully cultivated by the **Holy Spirit**. We are raised to life by through his Spirit.

This life produces fruit. It is the Holy Spirit's job to produce fruit in the life of a blessed person. What are these fruit? They are the things that cause him to love God's law: "love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law" (**Gal 5:22-23**). It isn't that they are the law. No, they are the inner dispositions that cause the law to be delighted in. For where these are, there is no breaking of the law, there is no hating of the law. This fruit bears in its season and the leaf of the tree does not wither. And the end of the Bible we read, "Through the middle of the street of the city; also, on either side of the river, the tree of life with its twelve kinds of fruit, yielding its fruit each month. The leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations" (**Rev 22:2**). The psalmist is picking major biblical themes that run their course through all of redemptive history as he begins to set our minds where they need to be if we truly want to be happy and blessed in this life. In these ways, we start to get subtle language that the triune God is present in Psalm 1 in very real and later explicit ways. It is this God who makes us happy.

The Wicked Man (1:4-6)

All of this is now contrasted with “the wicked” (Ps 1:4). “The wicked are not so.” The LXX puts it more forcefully, “Not so the ungodly. Not so.” They are not trees planted firmly in the law the Father by streams of the Living Water of the Son bearing the fruit of the Holy Spirit. And so the Psalmist now explains in two verses exactly this point.

First, he describes them as chaff. The wicked “are like chaff that the wind drives away.” Chaff is the opposite of a tree planted by water. The chaff is dead. It has no life. John the Baptist spoke of this chaff saying, “His winnowing fork is in his hand, and he will clear his threshing floor and gather his wheat into the barn, but the chaff he will burn with unquenchable fire” (Matt 3:12). This isn’t some horrible tyrant God who takes glee in torturing perfectly good people in hell for eternity. It is simply what you do with chaff. It is a husk, a shell, and good for nothing, and so you burn it. If God does not plant you by the waters of life, then you are already dead, for people are born spiritually dead in sin. They are not born alive to God. But through his word

and faith in it, life can come to those who are dead if they believe.

Second, and perhaps this is where John got the judgment part from: the wicked will not stand in the judgment. Not only John, but Jesus speaks of eschatological judgment with allusions to this verse. “So it will be at the end of the age. The angels will come out and separate the evil from the righteous and throw them into the fiery furnace. In that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth” (Matt 13:49-50). Again, people find the idea of hell offensive. But they start in the wrong place.

Who in the Psalm is thrown here? The wicked. Do we not believe that the wicked deserve punishment for their crimes? Is this not the basis upon which every legal system in the history of mankind has been established? The wicked are not good. They are wicked. They are perverse. They are immoral. They are sinners. They are scoffers. They are evil. And evil deserves punishment. Righteousness can stand for nothing less. Only fellows in league with evil think that evil should go unpunished, yet it is always hypocritical, as it picks on its own views of “evil” that it most certainly will punish with swift and uncompromising retribution. You

can't get away from it, no matter how morally relative you think you are. It is inevitable.

The last verse of Psalm 1 **summarizes** by telling us that “**the Lord knows the way of the righteous.**” His eyes are always on them. He knows and he sees. And this is given as a comforting through, for they are righteous. He will not let them be put to shame to the wicked. But he also “**knows the way of the wicked.**” And he knows that their way “**will perish**” (**Ps 1:6**).

Someone has pointed out that the first word of the Psalm starts with the first letter of the Hebrew alphabet (*aleph*), and the last word starts with the last letter (*tav*).²¹ To “**perish**” means “**to cease, vanish, fade away.**” Like the chaff going up in the wind. They are not grounded, they are tossed to and fro. They easily blow away. It is yet another metaphor for their end. Like the *tav*, perishing (*to'bed*) is the end for the wicked. But happiness is the beginning for those who love God's law.

As we conclude this psalm, consider a curious connection it has with Joshua 1. Moses told his successor,

²¹ Futato, 64.

“This book of the law shall not depart from your mouth, but you shall meditate on it day and night, so that you may be careful to do according to all that is written in it; for then you will make your way prosperous, and then you will have success” (Josh 1:8). There is another connection Joshua 1 has, but it is with Psalm 2. Moses told his servant, “No man shall be able to stand before you all the days of your life. Just as I was with Moses, so I will be with you. I will not leave you or forsake you. Be strong and courageous, for you shall cause this people to inherit the land that I swore to their fathers to give them” (Josh 1:5-6). Joshua is all about conquest, victory, and inheritance.

Psalm 1 and Psalm 2

Unfortunately, we do not have the time today to do justice to Psalm 2. It is too rich and too significant to skim over it. We will save a full look at it for next week. But it is quite important for us to see that these two Psalms really are meant to be read together. For in doing so, we are able to see some very remarkable things. We are able to see the main thing. So let's look at some of the connections now.

As many know, Psalm 2 is all about “**Messiah**,” the “**anointed**” of **Psalm 2:2**. We also know that the NT applies this Psalm to the Lord Jesus in many places. As we quickly scan the Psalm in this light, we see that the nations are raging against the LORD and against his Anointed-Messiah (**1-3**). But the Lord laughs at them, because they can’t touch his anointed, he has installed him as king on the holy hill (**4-6**). But this king is also his begotten son (**7**) to whom he gives the promise, “**Ask of me, and I will make the nations your heritage, and the ends of the earth your possession**” (**8**). In the process, anyone who does not kiss the Son will be destroyed like a potter’s vessel (**9-12**). So how is this related to Psalm 1? Here are a few ways of looking at it in no particular order.

First, we have seen that the happy man is “meditating” on the law of God (**1:2**). This is the very same word translated “plot” in **2:1**. The nations are not meditating on God’s law; they are meditating on conspiring against the LORD.

Second, the nations are angry. What are they angry about? They are angry that God has put them in “bonds” and “cords” (**2:3**). What are these bonds and cords? **We will**

see next time that they refer to the laws of God. The nations, the people, the kings, and the rulers hate God's law and do everything they can to free themselves from under it. But the happy man does not see God's law as a chain that imprisons him. He sees it as the very water that gives him life! And so Psalm 2 helps us see the contrast between the two types of people even more clearly.

Third, the person sitting in the “seat” of scoffers (1:1) can also be translated as the “assembly” of scoffers.²² This fits perfectly with 2:1-2 where the peoples are plotting and the rulers are taking counsel together. There is more going on with the wicked of Psalm 1 than meets the eye. Psalm 2 expands upon it.

Fourth, while the wicked “sit” in their scoffing seat (1:1) plotting away against God, God is “sitting” in the heavens laughing at them (2:4).

Fifth, the sinner has his “way” (1:1), and the righteous has his “way” (1:6). In the end, the “way of the wicked will perish” (Ps 1:1). But at the end of Psalm 2 it is the same. “**Kiss the Son, lest he be angry, and you perish in the way**” (2:12).

²² **Bruce C. Stark**, “Aspects of Psalm 1,” *Asbland Theological Journal Volume 1 1* (1968): 23.

Sixth, what happens on that day to the wicked? They will not “**stand in the judgment**” (*mshpht*; 1:5). This is the Judgment seat of Christ, as we have seen. In Psalm 2, the same root word is used warning “**O rulers [judges/shpht] of the earth. Serve the LORD ... lest you perish in the way.**”

Seventh, and finally,²³ Psalm 1 begins as we have seen with “happy.” Happy is the man. Psalm 2 ends with the very same word. “Happy are all who take refuge.” In Psalm 2, they are happy because they are taking refuge in the Messiah, in the begotten Son of the heavenly Father.

Thus far, we have spoken as if Psalm 1 refers to the happy man as anyone who delights and meditates on God’s law. And yet, the one thing we have not done yet is ask ourselves just who it is that really, at the end of the day, does what Psalm 1 says.

Sometimes, it is the believer. But not all of the time. For sometimes, the believer walks, stands, and even sits with the wicked. He does not delight in God’s law, but spurns it in

²³ There are even more literary connections with things such as “day” (1:2) and “today” (2:7); “yields” (1:3) and “make” (2:8) which are the same Hebrew word, “in season” (1:3) and “now” (2:10); “all” prospering (1:3) and “all” taking refuge (2:12); and various important prepositional links. See Robert L. Cole, “(Mis)Translating Psalm 1,” *Journal for Biblical Manhood and Womanhood* 10, no. 2 (2005): 41-43.

sin. As we will see, there are plenty of Psalms where the psalmist is pouring out his confession of sin to God. He has not perfectly meditated and delighted in God's law, otherwise, he would not have sinned.

In this light, it is interesting to now look at second Hebrew word of **Psalm 1:1**: the man. **Who is this man?** This question now brings us to **The Door** that the key unlocks. If the key was the law, I gave you several ideas that hinted that Jesus is at least the end of the Law, if not the very embodiment of it. But could he also be The Man?

The history of interpretation has been divided on this from the very beginning, and I'll tell you why I think that is in a moment. The first interpretation is the one we used thus far. Clifford calls it the ethical interpretation. Those who take it include Hilary, Ambrose, Gregory of Nyssa, and Cyril of Alexandria, Ignatius, the Epistle of Barnabas, and Calvin. On the other hand, you have Luther, Hippolytus, Jerome, Cassiodorus, Eusebius, and Augustine who take "the man" to be Christ.²⁴ Augustine says, **"This statement should be understood as referring to our Lord Jesus Christ,**

²⁴ See **Cole**, 35-36 and **Richard J. Clifford**, *Psalms 1-72* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2002), 41-42.

that is, the Lord-man ... ‘who has not gone astray’ ... as did the earthly man who conspired with his wife, already beguiled by the serpent, to disregard God’s commandments. ... Christ most certainly came in the way of sinners by being born as sinners are, but he did not stand in it, for worldly allurements did not hold him” (Augustine, *Expositions of the Psalms* 1:1).

Why would both interpretations be present? I suggest it is because by the **mystical union** wherein Christians are united to Christ; they are spiritually speaking, the same man. Christ is our head. We are his body. Therefore, what is true of the head will be true of the body—today in a limited way, tomorrow without sin. But as Eusebius of Caesarea said, “Our Savior ... is the first of them who rightly are called blessed. The first psalm, therefore, must refer to him inasmuch as he is the husband of his bride the church” (Eusebius, *Commentary on the Psalms* 1:1). This is why the Hebrew is not “a man,” but literally “the man” he adds. Strictly speaking, it is a singular articular noun preceded by a plural interjection so that it should not be translated “blessed are those,” but more literally “O the blessings of the man.”

Therefore, the Psalms open with two psalms meant to be read together. Both teach us about God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit (as we will see more of next week). But they particularly teach us about the coming of a man who is both like every other man and not like them. He is a man. But he is also a heavenly being. He is the Son of God. From this moment until the last, the psalter will be teaching us about him, causing us to rejoice in him and sing his praises for all the ways he is shown prior to his coming in human flesh. For they are spoken by him and they are all about him. Like Joshua, with the same name but greater, he inherits not merely the Promised Land, but the whole earth.

Happy is The Man who has delighted perfectly in God's law and meditated on it since creation itself. Happy is that Man for he did not walk in the counsel of the wicked, nor stand in the way of sinners, nor sit in the seat of scoffers. He is a tree planted by waters—the Branch and the Root of Jesse, the Oak of Israel, the Vine of God. He will judge the nations and all who have sinned against Heaven with a rod of iron.

And happy are all who kiss the Son, who take their refuge in him.

Outline Psalm 1

- I. The Righteous Man (vv. 1-3)
 - A. What he does not do (v. 1)
 - 1. Walk in the counsel of the wicked
 - 2. Stand in the way of sinners
 - 3. Sit in the seat of scoffers
 - B. What he does do (v. 2)
 - 1. Delight in Torah
 - 2. Meditate on Torah
 - C. What he is like (v. 3)
 - 1. A tree
 - a. Planted by streams of water
 - b. Bears its fruit in its season
 - c. Its leaf does not wither
 - 2. Everything he does, prospers
- II. The Wicked Ones (vv. 4-5)
 - A. What they are like (v. 4)
 - 1. Unstable chaff
 - B. What they will not do (vs. 5)
 - 1. Arise in the judgment
 - 2. Arise in the assembly of the righteous
- III. Summary (v. 6)
 - A. The Lord knows the way of the righteous
 - B. The way of the wicked will perish

Outline Psalm 2

- I. The Rebellious Kings (vv. 1-3)
 - A. Them: Third Person (vv. 1-2)
 - B. Them: First Person Speech Against Heaven (v. 3)
- II. The Heavenly King (vv. 4-6)
 - A. Him: Third Person (vv. 4-5)
 - B. Him: First Person Speech Against the Rebellious Kings (vs. 6)
- II'. The Anointed King (v. 7-9)
 - Him: First Person Speech in the Second Person (“you” “the Son”)
- I'. The Rebellious Kings (vv. 10-12)
 - Him: Third Person Speech Warning the Rebellious Kings