

His Way is the High Way

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Psalm 1-2

We want this year to stay in balance, to keep our spiritual equilibrium where it needs to be. The only way we are going to stay in balance is to keep the Word of God primary in our lives. The passage in Psalm 1 and 2 is very significant. We've all heard the worldly phrase "It's my way or the highway." I really believe if we are going to have this great prosperous and successful year that I believe the Father wants us to have that it is not going to be "my way or the highway," but it is actually going to be "His way is the His way." It is the best way for us in our lives.

With this new year, we have some choices to make. I like this time of the year for a lot of reasons. One thing I like to do is watch shows that reflect on the last year. I'm always interested to see who passed away that maybe I didn't know and to see some of the significant events. I don't read as much as I used to. I do a significant amount of study, but I don't read a lot of fiction books or autobiographies. However, over the holidays I read the autobiography of George W. Bush. I found it interesting as I read this book. It was fun to see what the President does on a daily basis. He talked about being an alcoholic and not really walking with the Lord. He talked about how his dad had Billy Graham over to the house and how Billy Graham had talked to him about Christ. George W. eventually believed that it was his faith in God that helped him get off the bottle and helped him really be the leader that he needed to be. I found it so interesting that even in the busiest days of his life, he always did a couple of things. He always got up in the morning and read his Bible, and he always ran. If the President of the United States had time to read the Bible every day, then you are not too busy to read the Bible. You may say, "Oh, you don't understand how busy I am." Maybe you have a whole bunch of jobs and you run around all week, but if you are too busy to read the Bible, you are too busy. God can put your life in such a way in which you have plenty of time to read the Bible. So let's be very careful.

Notice what the Bible has to say in Psalm 1:1, "*How happy is the man who does not follow the advice of the wicked, or take the path of sinners, or join a group of mockers! ² Instead, his delight is in the LORD's instruction,*" in the Law, in the Bible, "*and he meditates on it day and night.*" Here this prosperous, happy, blessed man is meditating on the Word of God day and night.

Then we are going to read this picture of this successful, prosperous person. Psalm 1:3, "*He is like a tree planted beside streams of water.*" What that means is that he always has everything he needs for nourishment and for nutritional value in life. "*He is like a tree planted beside streams of water that bears its fruit in season.*" In other words, it is healthy. "*Whose leaf does not wither.*" It is not dried up. "*Whatever he does prospers.*" There is the word "prospers" again. I don't want to spend a lot of time talking to you about how non-Biblical some of this prosperity gospel is. The genuine definition of prosperity is to be right in the center of God's will. I will tell you that the prosperity gospel does not fly in a third-world country.

Notice what the Bible says in Psalm 1:4. First, he talks about the blessed man who reads the Bible. It is like he is a tree planted by the rivers. Now, he is going to conversely share with you about the wicked, a negative example.

Psalm 1:4-5, “*The wicked are not like this; instead, they are like chaff that the wind blows away. Therefore the wicked will not survive the judgment, and sinners will not be in the community of the righteous.*” Isn’t that a great phrase, “*the community of the righteous.*” That is what the church is.

I want to take a minute. I went snow skiing this week, and I found this metaphor for the church on the ski slope. I want to tell you how it looks. The first thing young people do the first time they go skiing is to buy a dorky hat. So, there are the hat people. Then, there are the people that have not bought any insulated clothes in the last 2 decades, and they are wearing these tight ski suits—really tight. Then, there are the snowboarders, and they are wearing these crazy, wild clothes. There are the glove people, and there are the mitten people. So there are these people that have all of this different variety of clothing. What is interesting is that at the “chair lift” of life at the bottom of the slope, everyone is together dressed in all different kinds of clothing. And do you know what? It is all right. Nobody is making fun of the people in the dorky hats. No one is making fun of the people in the wild neon outfits or the spandex-looking stuff because everyone is together trying to have a good time. Why couldn’t the church be like this? Where there is a place for every one. It really does not matter so much how you look, and it really does not matter so much how you dress, and it does not matter where you are from, and it does not matter how good you are, and it does not matter if you are a snowboarder or a skier or a bunny slope person or if you are pretty skilled and you do the black diamonds, but there at the bottom of the hill there is a place for everyone. It was as if God said, “That is my heart for Surrey Hills Baptist Church.” That it would be a place that cowboys and punks and preppies and jocks and senior adults and new-borns and profession people and blue-collar people and no-collar people and wealthy people and poverty people would all come together for the singular purpose of worshipping and glorifying the Lord Jesus Christ. Well, that is another sermon ...

Concerning today, I am convinced that if we are going to be this church, if we are going to be prosperous in the new year, it will only be because we have chosen to take the Word of God and make it first in our lives.

The Psalms are interesting because the Psalms talk to us about this life that we go through. It is a complicated thing. If you have family and you are more than about the age of 8, you know that life is a very complicated thing, and it is not always smooth and it does not always go the way we wish. This world is a dangerous place. The Psalms talk to us about this place of suffering and intrigue and injustice. Basically, Psalm 1 and 2 are going to talk to us about this choice we make—the choice to go my way or the high way—His way.

The first thing concerning this text that I want you to see is that you will choose your way or His way. Notice the words in Psalm 1:1, “*How happy*” or “*how blessed*,” if you will. This word “*blessed*” is used 25 times in the 150 Psalms that we have, and it really frames chapter 1 and 2. Notice what your Bible says in Psalm 1:1, “*How happy is the man.*” Now we are going to look at chapter 2:12, “*All those who take refuge in Him are happy.*” We see here that there is indeed blessing for those who are relentlessly attentive and receptive to the will of God. In other words, they delight in the Law, in the Word of God.

Sometimes we think we can’t read the Bible. Over the last 72 hours, our church body spent hours reading the Bible out loud. To hear yourself read out loud is interesting. Many of you were blessed by reading the Bible out loud. There is something about reading the Bible rather than just doing mental gymnastics in which we read the first sentence and the last sentence of a paragraph and we keep going. I don’t know that we are really retaining that much from the Word of God when we do that. But if we read it out loud, if we delight in the Law, if we take our refuge in God, we are going to be blessed.

Here are some things I want you to think about:

1. There is a promise to obey. Let’s look at Revelation 1:3. This is perhaps one of the coolest passages in the whole Bible. This is a promise to those who will read this Word. Notice what it says, “*Blessed is the one who*

reads.” It is interesting. The context is that he is talking about the Book of the Revelation, but there is a promise of a blessing for the person who reads the Book of the Revelation. The verse goes on to say, “*and blessed are those who hear the words of this prophecy and keep what is written in it, because the time is near!*” There is this promise of blessing for those who read the scripture.

2. I also want to share with you the picture of the obedient. Here we see in Psalm 1:1 he says that his delight is in the Law, and then in verse 3 this “*tree planted beside streams of water.*” It is essentially saying that whatever resources in life you are going to need you are going to have access to those resources. It does not promise that you are going to drive a certain kind of car or live a certain life or have a certain monetary standard, but what it does say is that all of the resources that you are going to need in your life, all the nutritional value that you need, you are going to have access to in your life. God’s living Word provides us two things: the root and the fruit of our life, according to Psalm 1. Notice what it says in Psalm 1:3, “*that bears its fruit in season and whose leaf does not wither. Whatever he does prospers.*” So we are promised both fruit and result—a tree that is stable. Wouldn’t we like to have some stability in this dangerous world we live in because the roots are right next to the life-giving source. Our life-giving source this year is the Bible. So that is what we want to do. We want to challenge us today to get into the Word.

The final thing I want us to see today is the picture of the disobedient—those who choose not to be planted next to the rivers of living water. It is a contrast. If you are planted by the streams, you will have all you need. But if you are not planted by the streams, there is nothing substantial; there is nothing stable; there are no roots. To see the contrast, look in Psalm 1:1, “*How happy is the man who does not follow the advice of the wicked, or take the path of sinners, or join a group of mockers!*” Now, look in Psalm 1:6, “*For the LORD watches over the way of the righteous, but the way of the wicked leads to ruin.*” And so we see this sharp contrast. That word “*wicked*” is interesting in its context. It is not really referencing some heinous sin, but the word “*wicked*” there is more of a self centeredness, an introspection. You know the person that says, “Well, enough about me. What do you think about me?” For some people, it is all about them. This passage is saying that that constitutes wickedness. So, will you choose God’s rule or self interest?

Psalm 2 tells us not to expect the world, not to expect the kings and the rulers of this world to acknowledge God. It is just not going to happen. Look at Psalm 2:4, “*The One enthroned in heaven laughs.*” God does not expect all of the rulers of this world to fall prey. “*The Lord ridicules them,*” the world—those who are against Him. God is not amused; it is clear.

I want to close today by asking you this question. Who is in charge of your life? If God is in charge of your life, I will tell you there is only one way that God really speaks to us definitively today and that is through the Word of God. You may say, “Oh, God gives me inspiration.” Great! It is a little shaky, though. Your inspiration can be indigestion depending on what you ate the night before. You cannot allow your own thoughts to lead you because you are being attacked by the world, the flesh, and the devil, and those fiery darts are coming your way. The only thing stable, the only thing that is going to guide us through the year is the Word of God.

Let’s look at some verses. Let’s see what the Bible has to say about the Bible. Look at 2 Timothy 3:16, “*All Scripture is inspired.*” We believe in our fellowship in the infallibility and the inspiration of Holy Scripture; no doubt about it. We don’t have to argue it. Next week, I am going to talk about creation, and people are going to say, “Oh, boy. He’s a creationist.” I hope you believe that. I want you to when I’m finished next week. We believe that Scripture is inspired by God. 2 Timothy 3:16 says, “*All Scripture is inspired by God and is profitable.*” There is that word again—“*profitable.*” What are we looking to have this year? A profitable year “*for teaching, for rebuking, for correcting, for training in righteousness.*”

Look at Psalm 12:6, “*The words of the LORD are pure words.*” They are refined words. One translation says

they are “*flawless.*” The Bible is flawless like refined silver. It is pure. It is the real thing. It is not watered down.

Proverbs 30:5 says, “*Every word of God is pure; He is a shield to those who take refuge in Him.*”

Now notice what Jesus said about the Scriptures. In Matthew 5:18 Jesus said this, “*For I assure you: Until heaven and earth pass away, not the smallest letter or one stroke of a letter will pass from the law until all things are accomplished.*” You know my story if you have been around here. I was not raised in the church so much, but when I started going to church we had this thing called Vacation Bible School, and we would do these pledges. I will forever remember them because I had to memorize them. The pledge said this:

“I pledge allegiance to the Bible, God’s Holy Word, and will make it a lamp unto my feet and a light unto my path and will hide it’s words in my heart that I might not sin against God.”

I don’t think a sermon does much more than just puff up, give us knowledge unless we make application to the Word of God. I hope we have done a sufficient job to convince you that we need the Bible for this year. So, how are we going to do it? You can get a one-year Bible at most stores which is a great way to do it. It has some of the Old Testament, some of the New Testament, and some of the Psalms and Proverbs. It is a little bit ambitious. You might say, “I’m not a very good reader. I don’t have time. I’m a little ADD.” If so, here is something you could do. It is called “The One Minute Bible.” This book gives some Old Testament and some New Testament readings for each day. It is abbreviated.

We are not trying to keep tabs on anyone. We just want you to do something consistent, and we want you to do something regular. Interestingly enough, your Sunday School quarterly has a Bible reading guide through it. You could start in Genesis. You could try the New Testament. You could try the gospel of John. There are a lot of ways in which you could do it.

Our sole purpose for these 72 hours of reading the Bible and our worship experience today is to encourage our fellowship this year to have a prosperous year, and so I’m going to ask you students, members, and guests alike that you would make a commitment today to find a plan that will work for you and that you will regularly, systematically, and with great intentionality take God’s Word and hide it in your heart this year that you might have a prosperous year.