

The Way To Live

Text: Psalm 1

Theme: God Word shows us the way to live a blessed life: through Jesus Christ

Introduction — in 1991, the “Be Like Mike” ad campaign began

- featured basketball great, Michael Jordan, playing with average people & kids
- point: buy Jordan’s Nike athletic gear and you, too, could be like Mike

Not to be outdone, early 90s, Christian marketers got theirs in also

- WWJD bracelets started it, but spread to all sorts of other gear
- What would Jesus do? Was the question it asked
- if you would just do what Jesus did, you would be quite a witness

Which way is right way to live: Be Like Mike? Or ask WWJD?

- Psalm 1 helps us here, as psalmist points out the way to live
- yet, we cannot answer question fully until we read Psalm 2 along with it
- so, this morning, we’ll begin to answer: What is the best way to live?
- Lord willing, we will conclude next Lord’s Day as we consider Psalm 2

Psalm 1 & 2 set the tone for entire book of Psalms

- they go together: see the “blessed” in 1.1 and “blessed” in 2.12
- includes all that fits in between
- each of these two ends with the way that perishes (well, that makes answering easier)
- also note: man of Psalm 1 prospers in all he does, v. 3
- then see 2.8–9, where the anointed King conquers the world
- the King in Psalm 2 inherits the promises from Psalm 1
- keep this in mind as we look to God’s Word in both these psalms

For now, let’s begin with Psalm 1, where we see...

I. ONE WAY TO LIVE

- going to take the negatives first before moving on to positives
- so, in vv. 1–2, we are given one way to live
- clearly, the psalm writer tells us this is the way we should avoid
- live this way, he says, and you can count on never having favor of God rest upon you
- so, clearly, “Don’t be like these people”

1. Walk in counsel of wicked

- to walk is the way one lives their life
- the wicked follow their hearts, live out their dreams, choose their own destiny
- unrighteousness is the pattern of their living
- these are true criminals, guilty of breaking God’s laws
- punishment, retribution, condemnation is what they deserve for their way of life
- counsel seems wise to one who is ignorant or deliberately being foolish
- trouble for you & me in this world: message is persuasive and persistent
- philosophy of these wicked people comes from untold number of sources
- one would be wickedly foolish not to see it in today’s social media-saturated world
- we are bombarded by their proffered wisdom; becomes like air we breathe

2. Stand in way of sinners

- you can tell by the word “stand” that this is more permanent than walking
- if walking, you could pass on by, but no, foolishness becomes more apparent
- stop, listen, pay attention to, and start to think like the wickedly sinful of this world
- “way” is more than just a metaphor for a manner of living
- it is how they identify themselves
- “you are over there; but we are here, and we like it this way”
- Bunyan’s Pilgrim’s Progress is full of such men and women
- there’s Obstinate & Pliable, Ignorance & Flatterer
- these sinners include Worldly Wiseman & Hypocrisy, and more
- if Christian was to make it to the Celestial City, he could not stand in their way
- you & I have all these characters around us today as well
- begging, pleading, even tempting us to live like they live
- if we would do so, promised absence of conflict, prosperity, and great success
- the way of the world is a strong lure, but it’s promise? Well, we’ll see

3. Sit in seat of scoffers

- now, we’re no longer just passing by, or hanging out for a time
- to sit is to stay, to dwell, to take up residence with people like this
- who are the scoffers?
- they are the types who cannot understand living like a Christian
- they mock you, scoff at holiness, flaunt their sinful life before you
- **1 Peter 4:4 With respect to this they are surprised when you do not join them in the same flood of debauchery, and they malign you;**
- this shouldn’t come as any surprise; in fact, we must have our guard up to spot them
- **2 Peter 3:3 knowing this first of all, that scoffers will come in the last days with scoffing, following their own sinful desires.**
- Spurgeon said of these who mock the way of holiness:
- The seat of the scorner may be very lofty, but it is very near to the gate of hell

4. Outcome of this way of living

- v. 4 gives a very stark picture
- in contrast to another way to live, this is a strong: not so! Not so!
- while they may appear to prosper, that is not the reality
- **Job 21:13-14**
They spend their days in prosperity,
and in peace they go down to Sheol.
They say to God, ‘Depart from us!
We do not desire the knowledge of your ways.
- **Psalm 73:4-5**
For they have no pangs until death;
their bodies are fat and sleek.
They are not in trouble as others are;
they are not stricken like the rest of mankind.
- but that is a sham, a false front
- like chaff: the waste from the true harvest; what is taken, burned
- **Psalm 35:5 Let them be like chaff before the wind,**
with the angel of the Lord driving them away!

- **Isaiah 17:13** The nations roar like the roaring of many waters, but he will rebuke them, and they will flee far away, chased like chaff on the mountains before the wind and whirling dust before the storm.
- **Luke 3:17** His winnowing fork is in his hand, to clear his threshing floor and to gather the wheat into his barn, but the chaff he will burn with unquenchable fire.”
- when psalmist says the wind drives them away, he uses same word used for Spirit of God
- and is it not the Spirit who will blow them into a godless eternity full of torment & wrath
- v. 6 shows the end of this way of living: “the way of the wicked will perish”
- they will not rule with the righteous ones, have no part in gathering of God’s redeemed ones
- rather, their doom is sure, as is the evil devil they have served

It should be clear that is not a good way, nor a pleasant end to life, so we need to see...

II. A SECOND WAY TO LIVE

- let’s consider the far more positive way given here
- the one who wishes to live a blessed life will avoid the types mentioned already

1. you wouldn’t live this way; instead, you seek out wise counsel

- want to know what this might be like?
- read Proverbs, one chapter each day, for month after month after month
- soon becomes second nature to you, this wisdom & counsel of God
- do so with James: takes about 20 minutes to read straight through

2. what about standing? Not a chance, you might say

- why would I identify with sin and sinful living?
- an excellent question, but far too many in churches today do just this
- Oh, I don’t actually commit the sins, but I identify as such-and-such
- I have desires, attractions, addictions, longings; but I will never act upon them
-
- a life of godliness is what is expected, so I’ll give it my best shot

3. but there is a progression here as well

- start walking and hanging out with wicked
- soon find it easier to stand, identify, be with sinners
- from there, it is not a far throw to sit and dwell with scoffers
- I am convinced so many who “deconstruct” their faith followed this path
- they didn’t just wake up one morning and jump to mocking God
- it began subtly, gradually, until they abandoned their faith
- wanted sex without obligations or holiness of God in marriage alone
- longed for worldly wealth, notoriety, popularity and more

4. Blessed way is held up though

- and is it not appealing?
- yet delight in God’s Word, His law & instruction in way to avoid all those evil
- you might wonder why opposite isn’t put forward here
- walk in counsel of wise, stand in way of righteous, sit in seat of those who fear God
- because psalmist knows living in this way must come from heart
- this is no outward display only; that will fail and be blown with chaff

5. Delight in the Word

- this way requires the deepest desires for Word of God
- recognizes one cannot live apart from it
- only this can keep from dangers presented in v. 1
- sadly, many who give lip profession of faith fall by wayside & are blown away
- why? God's Word never captured heart, never gave self over to it
- demands meditation: word has picture of one quietly murmuring to self
- reciting passage after passage to self to drive truth into heart & mind
- day & night: what does this look like?
- it's like the background music of one's life, according to Christopher Ash
- some of you have caught me around the church humming to myself
- you ask me what song I'm singing and I can never answer
- oh, if I sang out loud, you'd know, but music just running through me
- I could only hope this were true of meditating upon God's Word

6. Prosperity

- vv. 3–4 not a promise of worldly wealth or physical health at all times
- this tree is grown by God, the Holy One
- this tree is vibrant, disease resistant (meaning, not following ways of wicked)
- full of life
- planted by streams of water
- **Isaiah 32:2 speaking of those whose trust is in the Lord**
Each will be like a hiding place from the wind,
a shelter from the storm,
like streams of water in a dry place,
like the shade of a great rock in a weary land.
- yields its fruit in season, always in a timely fashion
- this is the fruit of Spirit we see in Galatians 5
- they shall also not wither, which is what wicked will do when Spirit of God blows on them
- no, the one living in this way grows, bears fruit, gets pruned to bear more fruit
- he or she will one day rule and stand in judgment upon all those who reject Christ
- the whole congregation one righteous, both from Old Testament and New Testament
- they are known by the Lord
- need never fear hearing, "Depart from me; I never knew you"

This second way seems rather pleasant and appealing; I think I'll choose that one, you say. But could there be...

III. ANOTHER WAY?

- most have only ever seen two ways to live here in Psalm 1
- I dare say that is because we don't look at ourselves closely enough
- we don't see Psalm 2's Righteous King looming large over Psalm 1
- and that is what we must do: we must see Christ here, in Psalm 1, in the O.T.

1. How do you measure up to second way?

- oh, I know you; not worried about first way
- but we all want this second way, so let me ask again: how are you doing?
- do you avoid evil, sin, fend off temptation successfully every day?
- how about the perfect and perpetual delight in God's Law
- or does counsel of wicked, way of sinners, seat of scoffers cause shades & grays here?
- this delighting in Word poses huge problem for us

- this is the Law of God, remember: Do this & live
- any time you see law, or commands from Law, must think: Do this & live
- Luther said for those outside Christ, should tremble at these words
- but if still striving in own strength, I think there should be some trembling as well

2. So, this Blessed Man of Psalm 1 must be Christ

- the word is in the singular, looking to the Righteous King of Psalm 2 to fulfill it all
- in Christ is all blessedness; only way we'll ever know it, experience it
- praise the Lord, He has given us this in Christ
- **Psalm 73:25 Whom have I in heaven but you?
And there is nothing on earth that I desire besides you.**
- **Ephesians 1:3 Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places,**
- **2 Peter 1:3 His divine power has granted to us all things that pertain to life and godliness, through the knowledge of him who called us to his own glory and excellence,**

3. So, this other way is to look to Christ

- not by work and effort, sweat & toil of good works
- not by willing it to be so, for you would never be willing if God didn't make you willing
- this way, this third way, is only by God's grace in Christ Jesus

Conclusion – So, which is the way you are upon?

- counsel of wicked convinces you you don't need God; you can be good enough
- way of sinners tells you to identify yourself however you choose; don't let other tell you
- seat of scoffers: God is dead, man is the apex, do whatever you wish

Or do you sing with delight because in Word & Gospel you see God's beauty in Christ

- in Him, you love God's law
- you know it is only sure guide for holy living pleasing to God
- you sing this psalm because you know the gospel
- Jesus is the Blessed Man, fragrant aroma of life
- and so, by Holy Spirit's power, we resolve to walk with Him