

Lesson 78 - CHRIST - THE WAY OF RIGHTEOUSNESS *Psalm 1*

This first psalm sets the tone for all the psalms as it establishes the way of the righteous as opposed to the way of the ungodly. Some argue that these verses can only apply to the Lord Jesus Christ Himself. Others claim these verses apply to justified sinners, saved by the grace of God in and by the Lord Jesus Christ. Certainly, as it applies to any personal work and perfection of righteousness, it could only apply to Christ. But it can also apply to sinners saved by grace as we stand before God in Christ and as we have been brought by Christ through the work of the Holy Spirit to believe in and look to Him for all righteousness and eternal life.

(Psalm 1:1) - "BLESSED" - Many Hebrew scholars translate this word as "happy." This is not necessarily incorrect, but we must understand that this is not happiness due to our feelings or circumstances. It is true happiness that comes from knowing and looking to Christ for all salvation even when our feelings and circumstances bring us to sadness - *"Now the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, that ye may abound in hope, through the power of the Holy Ghost"* (Rom. 15:13). "Blessed" here describes one who is favored and in good standing with God, the Judge of all. It is the opposite of being cursed by the law of God which condemns all sinners to whom sin is imputed to death. As God manifest in the flesh, the Lord Jesus Christ was certainly favored by and in good standing with God the Father - *"And lo a voice from heaven, saying, This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased"* (Matt. 3:17). At the same time, Christ is called *"a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief"* (Isa. 53:3). A sinner saved by God's grace in Christ is most certainly "blessed" of *"God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, Who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ"* (Eph. 1:3). Those who are truly "blessed" are described in the following verses -

He *"walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly."* Christ ate with publicans and sinners, but He did not walk in their ungodliness and take their advice. He came *"not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance"* (Mark 2:16-17). The "ungodly" describes all unregenerate and unbelieving persons, both irreligious and religious. As Christ did not walk in the counsel of the ungodly, when, by the power of the Holy Spirit in the new birth, He gives His people spiritual life, knowledge, and brings them to faith in Christ and repentance of dead works, they no longer walk in the counsel of the ungodly. They walk in the light of Christ and His truth. They still struggle with sin within themselves, but they look to Jesus, the Author and Finisher of their faith.

"Nor standeth in the way of sinners" - We are all sinners. There are only sinners still lost in their sins and sinners saved by grace. But the *"way of sinners"* is the false ways of salvation that people devise and in which they stand firmly entrenched and rooted. It is the way of self-righteousness, which is the greatest of all sins. Christ Himself certainly did not stand in these false ways. He Himself is the only way of true salvation by God's grace (John 14:6). And because of our fall in Adam, we ourselves are born spiritually dead and depraved as evidenced by our being rooted in the false ways we devise of salvation conditioned on ourselves (Prov. 14:12; 16:25). We would all continue to stand in this false way if God had not bestowed His grace in Christ upon us and brought us into the right way which is Christ.

"Nor sitteth in the seat of the scornful" - This is the false comfort and rest that unbelievers who place no value on Christ and His righteousness sit. Obviously, the Lord Himself did not sit in this kind of seat. He valued His Father's glory above all things, and this is why He obeyed unto the death of the cross to establish a righteousness by which God is just to justify the ungodly (John 17:1-4). And by God's power and grace, He lifts His people out of

this seat of scorn in their unbelief and self-righteousness. He brings His people to value Christ and His righteousness above all things in salvation and eternal life.

(Psalm 1:2) - It was Christ's "*delight*" to think of and obey the law of the LORD. He is the perfect Godman Who never sinned. He always kept the law perfectly for His people. He is the very righteousness of God and the end of the law for righteousness to everyone who believes. How can we who are sinners delight in the law of God and make it the subject of our meditations without being beat down and condemned? It is only as we see the law perfectly fulfilled in and by Christ as our Surety, Substitute, and Redeemer. He satisfied the law and justice of God in our stead so that the law cannot condemn us (*Rom. 8:33-34; 10:4*).

(Psalm 1:3) - This is the success of Christ in His work of redeeming and saving His people from their sins. By His work on the cross as He died and arose again, He paid our sin-debt in full and established righteousness that has been imputed to us. Sinners saved by grace are the fruit of His obedience unto death (*John 12:24-33*). Also, in and by Christ, we are prosperous to bear the fruit of grace and eternal life and to bring forth fruit unto God (*John 15:1-8; Rom. 7:4-6; Gal. 5:21-22*). Because Christ cannot and did not fail, we who are in Him cannot and will not fail (*Rom. 7:24-8:1; 1 Cor. 15:55-57*).

(Psalm 1:4) - Now, the psalmist turns to "*the ungodly*," sinners lost in their sins, spiritually dead and depraved. They are "*like the chaff*," the worthless leftovers after the grain harvest has been brought in. It is good for nothing but to be driven away, i.e. tossed aside and burned. Let us remember that we are all by nature "*ungodly*" (*1 Cor. 2:14; Eph. 2:1-3*). If we are now part of the wheat harvest of God's people, it is all because of God's grace in Christ. We have nothing to boast of in ourselves (*Psa. 130:3-4; 1 Cor. 1:29-31; Gal. 6:14; Php. 3:3*).

(Psalm 1:5) - Those who die in unbelief are the "*ungodly*" who will appear before the LORD under the charge of their sins. Because they continued self-righteously to stand in the way of sinners and died in their sins, they will not "*stand in the judgment*." They will be cast down and exposed to be workers of iniquity (*Matt. 7:21-23*). They have no savior, no mediator, and no righteousness to plead before holy God. Their sins are charged to them, and they are judged accordingly - as deserving of eternal death and damnation. They will not be counted with "*the congregation [assembly] of the righteous*," i.e. those who are found before God in Christ - washed from their sins in His blood and clothed in His righteousness imputed to them. They stand in the way of Christ, the only way of salvation, forgiveness, righteousness, eternal life, and glory - "*Even as David also describeth the blessedness of the man, unto whom God imputeth righteousness without works, Saying, Blessed are they whose iniquities are forgiven, and whose sins are covered. Blessed is the man to whom the Lord will not impute sin*" (*Rom. 4:6-8*).

(Psalm 1:6) - "*For the LORD knoweth the way of the righteous*" - The LORD knoweth this way because it is HIS way. He made and paved this way by His Son, the Lord Jesus Christ Who is the Way of Righteousness for His people. This was (and is) God's way from the beginning, devised in the everlasting covenant of grace made before the world began of which Christ is the Surety. Christ opened this way for all whom the Father gave to Him by His obedience unto death and resurrection from the grave. HE IS THE LORD OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS! "*The way of the ungodly*," which is any other way other than the way of Christ, "*shall perish*." How thankful we who are objects of God's grace should forever be!