

Godly is Good

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[0 : 00] Now, on for a short time this evening to look at Psalm 1. We read that Psalm together. It was, I think it was a translation by O.P. Robertson, who is an Old Testament scholar.

But we have the Psalm more familiar in page 543 of our Pew Bible. And this is, I think, well this is actually the last sermon on this theme for the young people.

Although there is an identity next week, but we're meeting in a leaf-free church, so there will not be a sermon based on a Psalm. So we've been looking at Psalms with up-to-date themes. And I think godliness is a very up-to-date theme.

And I'm preaching to all this evening, including, very much primarily, preaching to myself. But I am making a specific appeal to young people tonight. You can judge whether you regard yourself as a young person.

But if you regard yourself as an old person, don't switch off. Because the truth will be there. The truth will be there for all of us. And it will be what we need to think about.

[1 : 23] I do want to make an appeal very much to the young people, with God willing, your lives stretching ahead of you tonight. And I want to make an appeal to you to look for the godly life, the godliness.

Being like Jesus Christ, however you want to describe that. But godliness, we're kind of an old-fashioned word in many ways. I want you to pursue that. I want you to be young people that are excited by that, who are going to have vision for Jesus Christ, who are going to be influential for Jesus Christ, who are going to be the next generation of the church, who are not going to hide, who are not going to drift, who are not going to backslide and fall away.

When the first challenge comes, when the first major crossroad is met in your life, I want you to be those who are going to be godly in your lives and follow Jesus Christ.

And in order to do that, it's kind of similar to this morning at one level. We need to know God. We need to know ourselves. And we also need to know our culture, the culture that we live in.

But what I want to ask you this evening, as a young person, particularly as a young person, but all of us in our lives, what is the world that you're living in? And by that I don't mean what culture we are in.

[2 : 46] A different question altogether. I mean, what is the world you're living in, day by day? Is it a world that is inhabited? Is it a world that is lived in the presence of God? Or is it not?

That's really what I'm asking. I'm not concerned about wider issues, about theological knowledge, about our church involvement. I'm speaking about the core of your life, the very inner being of your life.

Wherever you go, this core goes with you, this ego goes with you. And I'm asking in that place, are you living in the presence of God in that place in your life?

Wherever you go, are you aware of being in the presence of God or not? In other words, does God, is he taking that place of Lordship in your heart?

And does he reign in your heart? Or are you in danger of him being absent from your heart? And that is something that I'd like to think about. Does God reign in your heart and in your life?

[3 : 57] Or is he absent from that place? Now this Psalm is about godliness. Well, it's about the contrast actually of godliness and not.

And the godly person in this Psalm is described in verse 1 as being blessed. Or maybe happy. Happy is a kind of more accessible word for us to use. Happy, contented or blessed is the person who is godly, who walks in a certain way.

And when the Psalmist speaks here about being blessed, being happy, this is a conditional state. What do I mean by that? Well, I mean it's dependent on the kind of lifestyle we live as believers.

He's not talking about our state, our condition, our happiness because we're Christians. We're all in a special place because we've trusted in Jesus.

But he's saying you will know happiness as a Christian when you live a certain way. It's conditional. It's saying there's blessedness, there's happiness when you live a certain way.

[5 : 16] He's speaking up. Remember this morning I spoke up briefly about trusting in Jesus, but I was saying that wasn't irresponsible. It wasn't like denying responsibility for our own life.

Well, that's what I mean tonight by saying the blessedness we enjoy is because we take spirit's own responsibility, as Billy was saying earlier, for making the right decisions and not going the wrong path.

So it's our responsibility with God's help and dwelt by the spirit to live a certain way. Then he says we will know blessedness or happiness in our lives. Contentment.

Can I just give an illustration of that? It's about like happy motoring. Happy motoring will occur when you put the right fuel in the car.

If it's an un-leded tank, you put an un-leded fuel there and you'll have happy motoring. The car will run, given all things other things being equal. Don't do what I have done on three separate occasions.

[6 : 19] Put diesel in a petrol car because you'll not be far along the motorway before it stutters to a halt. And you will not be, you'll be unhappy motoring. It will not be blessed motoring.

It will be miserable motoring because you put the wrong fuel into the car and it will not run. And so here, Jesus, God is saying through His word that we will be blessed when we feed our souls as Christians with the right fuel, when we make the right spiritual choices and when we live in the right way.

You see, there's a right way. Please don't sit back and say, you know, oh God's not giving me this or not done that for me and life's miserable because He gives us responsibility and says to His, you're children, you're my children now.

I want you to live this way. You will know blessing when you live this way. I'm not saying life will be easy. I'm not saying there will not be difficult choices. I'm not saying we will not go through the valley of the shadow of death, but we will know a sense of peace and blessing when we choose the way of life that is responsible, that He wants us to do and He empowers us to do so.

So there's both in the Psalm as with many truths in the Bible. There's a negative element to that and there's a positive element to that. And so the Psalmist begins with this negative dimension, which is very clear and very simple.

[7 : 50] And I don't see spend much time on that. He says, blessed is the man who does not walk in the council of the wicked, stand in the way of sinners, sit in the seat of mockers.

So that's the negative. He begins with a negative because the Psalmist knows the human heart.

And so there's this responsibility if we are to be godly. And I really want the young people to think about being godly young people, people who have a passion for Jesus Christ.

And this is part of the dynamic and part of the way in which we will find this path of living.

The negative dimension is avoiding danger. He speaks here about the wicked, the sinners, the seat of mockers. And these are really just terms that summarise the thinking and the philosophy, philosophical thinking, the life and the lifestyle that leaves God out of the picture.

So remember I started at the beginning saying, at the core of your life do you have God there in the presence of your... Or is he not there? Not in church, but the privacy of your own heart and of your life is God there.

[9 : 08] The presence of God is he guiding and protecting and you can relate it with him or is he not? Well here, the wicked, the wicked, the sinners and the mockers, that is a representation of those whose attitudes and lifestyle has left God out, okay?

The ungodly, the godless at that level. Those who make no reference to God or to Jesus Christ in their choices, in their lifestyle, and in who they listen to and who influences them and in their behaviour.

And so they will have a specific attitude in their lives, the wicked, the sinners and the mockers, those who are not believers, who have not put their trust in Jesus Christ.

They will have a sinful attitude to worship, to serving, to forgiveness, to the use of their time, to friendship, to poverty, to wealth, to ambition, to relationships, to sex, to drink, to pleasure, to holidays, to morality, to ethics.

They will all have a specific philosophy of life on all of these issues that doesn't have God at the centre, that isn't subservient to what God says and doesn't listen to God.

[10 : 30] And what the Salmester is warning here against is for the Christian to be aware of these ungodly influences in our lives, sneaking up on us, because it happens so very easily.

I know all about that, and I dare say you do as well in your life, that we all know about the subtlety with which we begin to imbibe a philosophy of life and thinking and a relationship without God.

So God isn't at the core of our life and isn't at the core of our thinking, and we just make choices and we think as if there isn't a God and we don't think in a godly way.

And so this ungodliness becomes a series of choices that we make in our lives day in and day out. It's a regress, how can you call it, a grace regressional.

We're regressing away from grace and from God in our lives. He's not there more and more in our thinking because we're imbibing the philosophy and the lifestyle of a world that doesn't have God at the core, on the throne.

[11 : 40] The wicked, the sinners, the mockers as it's described here. And there's a regression, isn't there? It's very interesting. It talks about walking and then standing and then sitting.

Can you see the regression there? You start by walking along with those who think this way, who leave God out of their lives. And well, you're free to go a different way when you're walking, aren't you?

But then you stand and you stopped. And when you stop, you're walking along the road and you want to hear something, so you stop so you can listen to it. Then you're listening to what they're saying much more.

You're taking time to think it and process it. And then you're sitting with them. You're in their company. Their philosophy of life that is without God and without Christ and without all that goes with that has become what triggers you, what makes you think the influence behind your life and your thinking.

That is a subtle and gentle regression of grace. Grace comes away from us in our lives. And we see that and I've seen that a hundred times in my own life.

[12 : 54] The older people and I'm sure Billy would admit to that. He'll have seen it in his life and the dangers that it might be in your life as well. Where you move, you begin to move away.

Maybe you move away. Maybe you may, for example, made a profession of being a Christian when you were young, very young, younger at home with your family. Your parents were maybe Christians.

And then you've come to Edinburgh and you're away from your parents. And all of a sudden there's a lot of freedom. And you've got a whole lot of new friends that live in this camp.

And I'm not saying don't have these friends, please for a moment. We need to recognise that. It's important. But they begin to influence you much more and their thinking is what influences you.

And you start going to the parties that they're going to and you start thinking in the way that they think and acting in the way that they act. And as you do so, there's a parallel something happening.

[13 : 49] On the other side, you stop reading your Bible. You're praying less. It's becoming more and more insignificant in your life. Because you've walked and you've stood and maybe now you're sitting in the Council of the Ungodly.

You've moved away from what you know and where Jesus Christ is. You begin then on that kind of opposite parallel way of living to avoiding Christian company and avoiding church.

And you find good reasons for avoiding church. You know, we'll all find good reasons for avoiding church and Christians because Christians are a miserable bunch of failures. And they'll always less down.

And we'll always have 10, 20, 50 good reasons for leaving a church. Because we'll be hurt. Because we'll have been ignored. Because we haven't been understood. Because things are poor and bad and miserable.

And we will justify the choices we will have made to stay away from church, but more importantly to stay away from God's word, to stay away from prayer. And all of these things will lead us to regressing in our life of grace.

[15 : 00] The Christian life, all of a sudden seems hugely boring. And everything out of our Christian life seems hugely attractive and fun. We were fed up of this apparent relentless guilt trip that we were being put on by Jesus Christ and by the church.

And we want to be free from that. So we move and we start being influenced and listening to and responding to those who the Bible describes as not having God in their lives.

The Council of the Wicked, the Way of Sinners and the See of Mockers. What the Scripture is warning there is about the choices that you make now.

Can I say young people tonight at the cusp of your lives where you're young and energetic and gifted and talented. And I've got so much to offer for Jesus Christ.

The choices you make now will mold the way that you go in life, will change your life. And sin is brilliantly tempting.

[16:06] It's absolutely tempting and beautiful in its own way and dangerous. But there will be a great cost to life if you choose to go down that road and ignore this negative which says do not walk in the council, do not stand in the way, do not sit in that seat.

This is really important stuff as God challenges us to think about the choices we make and the decisions that we are making in our lives. Focus on the grace of God and the glory of God which we'll go on to speak about briefly.

You know I've seen a lot of my contemporaries who made profession of faith at the age that I did, 15 and 16, who moved their lives out of grace and into this lifestyle without God.

And I've seen some of them hobble back, bloodied by their experiences, potentially regretful, often broken, delighted to sense and be touched by grace again.

But others remain spiritually in the wilderness and we stand under God and plead for their souls.

[17:36] So there's a negative focus in godliness, the young people, but there's also a positive focus, thankfully. Thankfully the negative is only really one verse and the rest generally is this positive focus about embracing the Lord, okay?

Young people in the focus, in the living, there's always a negative, there's always a way not to walk. Tomorrow you will have a choice of the way you walk, what choices you make with God or without God, following Him or not following Him, who you're listening to, who's influencing you, what philosophy of life you're taking on board.

But there is always this positive element also that is crucial and fundamental, that it's a relationship of love and grace, but we are to be people who delight in the Lord, in the law of the Lord and His law.

He meditates day and night. This is the godly person. So the positive element is Jesus Christ, His love and His power and His influence to transform us from the inside out.

And to use all this stuff for one of a more theological term, all this stuff in our lives that we can't change to use that, to transform us and to mold us.

[19:00] Positive element is we take delight, this is a relational term, we delight in the Lord and this Redeemer, who is ours, and we do so by loving the truth.

Delight in the law of the Lord and His law, He meditates day and night. That's really just delighting in the character and the moral efficacy and beauty of Jesus, knowing Him through His Word.

You know, we've talked a lot in the last few weeks about the Word and the incarnate Word. Jesus is the Word made flesh, the Bible is what speaks about Jesus, all the old and all the new, speaks about Jesus.

We've got to sometimes unpack that and learn it and find out. Meditate on it, memorise it, repeat it, apply it. You know, and meditate, you know that really just means murmurs.

We murmur it, we kind of repeat to ourselves, meditation, I guess. We kind of think of transcendental, floating six feet up there with our legs crossed.

[20:10] It's not really what it is, it's kind of repeating and going through and thinking on God's Word and as Billy was saying, you know, daily do that on his law.

Meditates day and night, there's this repetitive daily relationship with God and I'm asking the young people if you do that and if you don't, I'm encouraging you to do that.

You know, just as much as you will eat your breakfast, or if breakfast isn't a good example if you just go for a crispy cremate breakfast, if your lunch or your evening meal, whatever it is that you do regularly, physically, do spiritually with God's Word, it's vital for you.

It's vital that you don't rely on other people to do that. That you certainly don't rely on me and just a one or two sermons a week, but you rely on that relationship of knowing God because that will begin to be what influences you.

You know, what is influencing you? Who is influencing you? What are we taking in? We have to be feeding our mind all the time with something and if we're always in the company of those who don't have Jesus Christ at the core of their lives then we will find that is what is influencing us and to counter that we need to be being influenced by God in His Word and in His truth and I really want you to think about that, where your heart is, where you're getting your feeding and influence you find the word boring and dull, I know that sometimes what it's like for us as young people sometimes like that for you as young people but as you pray for God's blessing and you pray for His eyes to see and you will find Him speaking to you and you will find that it begins to get delightful and exciting and important in your life so loving the truth, being well-rooted in your life, well-rooted in your life.

[22 : 09] Verse 3, He is like a tree planted by streams of water which year is through and it's season well-rooted. You know the interesting thing about roots? You don't see them.

You don't really see the roots do you? You see this lovely tree or bush or whatever that happens to be there and you see its fruitfulness or you see its leaves green and you see it's healthy, don't you? Or unhealthy but you don't really see the roots and so I'm saying to you again tonight, God wants you to be godly, He wants you to be His He wants you to be visionary and in the right place and following Him and He says, He says, no one else will see how you do that because it will be invisible He's talking this evening, He's challenging about your and my invisible spiritual life but we're like when all the doors are closed, when nobody sees us, our thought process the imaginations that we have, the picture house of our mind, the invisible spiritual life where are we rooted? He wants us to be rooted by, you know, He gives us that image of streams of water of being in the presence of the Holy Spirit and of the energy that comes and the strength that comes from God in prayer and in fact, they below the surface what makes you who you are? Nobody sees where are your roots? What are you dependent? What is influencing you at that level?

Faith, therefore becomes something then, when these roots are well rooted, deep into the truth then you will find that you will be solid and you will be firm as a Christian when bad times come, when drought comes, you'll not be dependent on feelings you'll not even be dependent on a good church or on friends while all of these things are important because you will be dependent, your circumstances will not govern your godliness you will be godly because your roots are deep down in God and in a personal relationship with God, deep conviction now that's hugely important for you and important for me and remains important for us especially can I say when drought comes? because as a young person just now, you've got lots of young, you're in a very fortunate position here in the church here in Edinburgh because a lot of young Christians don't have any other young Christians who they can be friends so you're in a great time, you've got great place, lots of good things happening it's easy in some ways, in many ways it's easy to be a Christian but bad times will come, drought will come, difficulty will come and if your roots are shallow, if they're not grounded deep in a relationship with God when drought, spiritual drought comes, your leaves will wither and he says, if you're godly that will not happen again, please don't underestimate, I'm not underestimating these difficulties or these droughts or these difficulties that come but the answer of being blessed is when our roots are deeply grounded in a relationship with God because that means we're loving the truth as we've seen, we're well rooted and it means we'll also be fruitful who yields its fruit in season so if the roots are the invisible side of our Christian life that I don't see that maybe your husband and wife doesn't see that your friends don't see but that wrestling with God, that praying to God, that speaking to God, that listening to God all of these relational realities, that's the invisible thing the visible godliness is the fruit that people will see and that is what is good

[26 : 21] I want to see young people who are bearing spiritual fruit I want you to have a philosophy of life, a spiritual philosophy of life which is immersed separation, okay I want you to be immersed in this world with your friends with this world and all it has but to be separate to be separate in your morality, separate in your conversation and then that's going to bring tensions, separate in your thinking, separate in your worship separate in your priorities, immersed separation now that's not a theological term, I've made it up, you'll not find that in any of the books but to me that describes Jesus Christ best a drunkard and a glutton he was accused of being not because he was, but because he was immersed because he loved the lost and he wanted them for himself but he was utterly, utterly separate he was in the world, but he was never of the world and he was in all intents and purposes the perfect example of coming out from among them and being separate it wasn't a physical monastic separation it was utterly moral and Christ-centered and spiritual separation and

that's where we will bear our fruit that's where we will be seen and I want you to be attractive, Christ-like, graceful, respectful people, young people who are like Jesus Christ in all your individuality godly people, godly Christians, godliness

I don't want that to be old-fashioned and irrelevant and for old people just, I want it for old people too but that is what's powerful, that's what's going to be attractive that's what God wants for you tonight and it is blessed it's the condition it's the condition, it's the conditional life if you follow him, if you don't do and if you put your roots and if you are well-rooted and love the truth you will bear fruit and you will be blessed and that also means you will know his protection in your life in verse 6 the Lord watches over the way of the righteous now, I don't know the mystery of God's providence in individual people's lives very often, it is mysterious but I'm sure from our point of view as we look at it at least when you make the wrong choices as a Christian it can leave you sometimes very alone spiritually as it were, because sin does that, it deceives us it's, God is sovereign and He is looking over everything but we don't have that same promise of company and protection and His overarching loving watch when we choose to walk out of His company that's the choice you'll make sometimes and I make but sin promises everything and it produces nothing but Jesus wants us to understand that when we walk His way in Godliness

He says, I see you, I'm seeing you and it's with a loving eye now sometimes you want out of that because it seems too overarching and overbearing but it's sin that wants us to move out of that loving protectiveness and it's sin that deceives us and the way of the Godly, along with that protection has a great perspective of this future where if there are winners, verse 5, the wicked will not stand and the judgment and our sinners in the assembly of the righteous that we have this assembly to look forward to and this gathering, it's great where a gathering would be a good word for it the Scottish word for it would be a caley this gathering, this communion, this people, this assembly this belonging that we have as Christians life with God, in His company with His people and with His eternity at a feast, at a wedding in His home, in a city, in the bliss that goes with that that is the perspective of the Godly and that's what He wants for us and that's what He wants us to be so I close this evening by asking the question, where are you standing or maybe even where are you walking or I shouldn't deflect that question of myself where am I standing, where am I walking, where am I sitting in my life but I do ask the young people particularly what's it to be for you are you feeding your faith have you stopped just thinking kind of God is going to zap you all the time and keep you going without recognizing the importance of eating and drinking spiritually feeding on Him, praying to Him, reading His word considering the company we keep the philosophy of life that we imbibe and all that goes with that it's not about church however significant important church is this is about you your core, your ego is God there who is influencing you, who are you listening to who's at the helm of your life the wicked way of sinners, the seat of mockers might be busy just now, it might be popular it might be well populated and influential and significant they may be standing now, it may be important and influential but one day they will not stand and they will no longer be therefore the wicked will not stand in the judgment where are you taking your influence from the wicked will not stand in the day of judgment if we don't believe that then otherwise

Calvary becomes a blasphemous sham what kind of life is it? I want you to be godly young people God wants you to be godly young people it's conditional on obedience having come to faith in Him and received the Holy Spirit that we will know that blessing and that happiness so I hope you will be able to discuss that a little bit more this evening identity and that you will pray for one another and that you will spur one another on I haven't said anything about that but spur one another on, encourage one another in godliness pray together, read together do the things that it's not cool to do I haven't used any funky language tonight to try and be hip and happening and bring you alongside I've left that to Holy Spirit to do these things I can't really speak your language as young people I can only speak from God's point of view but be encouragers to one another

Billy came up and spoke tonight he's one of the greatest encouragers in this church be like him, be like Jesus encourage one another, build one another up and be godly young people that's where the real courage is amen, let's bow our heads and pray Lord God I ask and pray for your blessing on our thoughts this evening and on this great challenge of blessedness godly living that knows happiness and contentment not because it's a life of ease but because our roots in good times or in drought is deeply fixed in the water of life and in what comes from him and Lord there's no easy way out of that other than digging deep and reaching deep into him especially when it's tough and difficult so give us that courage, give us that backbone give the young people that backbone may

they not feel that everything must come easy may they work out their salvation with fear and trembling knowing the gift of grace is full and free but the life of the saint is a challenging one may they be godly may they be great examples in their workplaces in their homes and their universities and their colleges whatever they are, whatever they do may they stand up for Jesus Christ may they nail their colours firmly to the mast may they be those who are the future of the church may there be leaders from among our young people that are going to be great in the kingdom of God if there will be such time for that to happen and Lord may your spirit guide and keep us as we sing our parting psalm of praise this evening as we meet together following this, those who meet we ask in Jesus name, amen.