“The Measure of the Wicked.”

Psalm 1:1-2

January 12, 2025

Psalm 1:1-2 (PowerPoint presentation)

Preface.

Psalm 1 begins with the alluring words, “Blessed is the Lord,” so one would expect the words that immediately follow to be positive, active words, but instead they are followed by negative words.

“Blessed is the one who does not walk in step with the wicked or stand in the way that sinners take or sit in the company of mockers,”

We don’t seem to like to be so negative, but not only in this Psalm 1, but the Bible always speaks to us using negative expressions such as “shall not, nor even be.”

Why?

Why des it uses negative expressions first rather than positive ones?

Part One

There are several reasons, but I think the first reason is that the Bible is a more realistic book than any other book in the world.

The Bible always starts from the reality of the world as it is, without any embellishment.

Recently, I have been reading the book of Isaiah, and if I look at Isaiah 30, I see that it is recorded that the Israelites, in response to the prophets who were trying to speak the word of God straight,

said, “Speak what is comfortable to us, even if it is deceitful” threatening them.

Even the Israelites, who are supposed to adore the Word of God, would say such things. In this way, we people seem to be less willing to look at our own evil reality, which is terrible and ugly as it is.

We try to start with a cool blueprint, a vision, a dream, and say, “Let’s have a beautiful happiness“.

However, as if to say that this is the most obvious reason why we are not able to achieve happiness, the Bible begins with the reality of the world, the reality of the bitterness and curses of our existence as human beings in this world.

I believe that the Bible is a very honest book that tries to bring us humans face to face with reality as it is.

The second reason why the Bible always begins with a negative statement is found in Jeremiah 17:9

Jeremiah 17:9 (PowerPoint)

as it says, I think it is because the very way we humans live is the measure of the wicked, the way of sinners, and the seat of mockers.

The Bible consistently tells us from beginning to end, “Without realizing our own sin, we can have no hope.”

The Bible tells us that we humans must first and foremost realize this. “This world itself has gone astray, and the thoughts of men’s hearts are evil from their infancy. The earth has become so corrupt and filled with tyranny that God repent and hurt his heart that he created man on earth. The main culprit of this is myself, each one of us, ourselves.”

“This world, this life, is pretty good!” one might say, but the Bible tells us, head-on, straight and honest, that “No, men or their lives

seem to be the measure of the wicked, the way of sinners, and the seat of scoffers."

The third reason why the Bible always begins with a negative statement is that if God is a physician who deals with the souls of men, he must first begin with a diagnosis before he can cure them.

When a person is sick, it should not be medicated whatever it is and call it good. But rather, the doctor must accurately diagnose and treat what kind of medicine, how much, for how long, and in what way is most appropriate for the patient.

If the doctor treats you poorly, why you are having these symptoms, what is causing them, and how to cure them, you will not be able to put yourself at ease.

Treatment begins by honestly facing the problem at hand.

When it comes to illness, we all hope that doctors will diagnose and treat us honestly, straightforwardly, and accurately. However, when it comes to the soul and spirit, people do not like to be diagnosed honestly, straightforwardly, and accurately, perhaps because their pride gets in the way, or perhaps it is because of the life outlook, worldview, values, and colored glasses they have cultivated up to that point.

"No, no, there is still hope in this world. People are not yet easily dismissed. I'm not easily dismissed either. Isn't the civilized society created by human beings amazing? Human beings, after all, are amazing." I wonder if we humans tend to avoid an honest and accurate diagnosis of the world, people, and ourselves, using the same words and methods that Satan used to tempt Jesus, whether we know it or not.

Matthew 4:8-11 (PowerPoint)

Satan does not want us to face the evils of this world.

He calls this world “prosperity” and says, “Don’t you want it?” and tempts us.

But Jesus says, “There is no glory in this world. What there is is corruption and tyranny like a scavenger who has forgotten God.”

If we want to be “blessed” as God teaches, we must first search for the cause and face reality.

The fourth reason is to repent before God if we are confronted with reality.

When John the Baptist began his ministry, he declared to the people,

“Repent, for the kingdom of heaven has come near.”

When Jesus also began his three-year public life, his first words to the world were, “Repent, for the kingdom of heaven has come near.”

And the fifth reason why the Bible always begins with a negative statement is that it is trying to “teach us the fact that the way of life and salvation that God offers is totally different from anything we have ever known or mastered, essentially and fundamentally different.”

The Bible says, “The path to blessedness is totally and completely different from what you have always thought. If you come to me and listen, you will be amazed. You will hear things that you have never heard before. You will hear revolutionary things that you could not even imagine before, as if you were hearing stories from a completely different world.”

The Bible is not the word of man, but the word of God, and it does not belong to this earth, but has come down from heaven and been given to us.

We are reminded that its content is fundamentally different from what the world teaches.

Ten years ago, when I went to the U.S. in a state of burnout, I thought, “Let’s read the Bible again, slowly, little by little,” and I

started reading it, but I could not understand what Jesus was saying at all. There were times when I thought, “Is this person a little crazy?”

The reason was obvious.

It is because I was thinking about this place.

Gradually I came to realize the following. “I don’t understand Jesus’ words at all because I’m trying to estimate them in terms of the common sense of this world, the kind of truths that people have taught, promoted, enlightened, known and mastered, the kind of enjoyment, pleasure and happiness that people advocate.”

The Apostle Paul said the following in Colossians 3. “Seek ye after that which is above. Think on things above, where Christ is seated at the right hand of God. Do not think about what is on the earth.” Because I was thinking of earthly things and my mind was dominated by jealousy, longing, and envy toward earthly things, I could not understand Jesus’ words.

The Bible tells us that the blessings of the Bible and the blessings of the world are so different that they cannot even be compared, and that the former is the only way of God.

Part Two

Next, after considering these five reasons why the Bible begins with a negative statement, let us look at the negative statements of Psalm 1 and the specific things we must avoid in order to be blessed as God teaches us to be.

Psalm 1:1 (PowerPoint)

The first is, “Do not walk in the judgment of the wicked.”

I would like to explore from the words of the Bible who and what kind of person the “wicked” refers to, and what the Bible says about the “wicked.”

Let’s look at Psalm 119.

(Psalm 119 is another typical biblical phrase that begins with the words, “Blessed are ”)

Psalm 119:53 (PowerPoint)

Psalm 119:155 (PowerPoint)

The “wicked” to whom Psalm 119 refers is the one who abandons God’s teachings, the one who does not value or find value in God’s Word, the one who does not seek God’s Word.

The wicked, it says, are far from God’s salvation, too, because they do not seek God’s Word.

Let’s look at one more passage.

Psalm 10:4 (PowerPoint).

The wicked are those who say, “There is no God,” all of them.

It is much, much broader in scope than the wicked in the world.

It is the person who cannot, will not, or does not want to recognize the existence of the one true God. Or, they are those who cannot or do not want to recognize their own poverty, sinfulness, and cheating before God. All of these are called “the wicked.

Where do you think the thought or attitude of “there is no God” shows up, he says, “it shows up on the face.”

By “face,” I think he means outwardly, and by outwardly, he means toward people, and toward people, he says, “The pride that says, ‘There is no God’ will show itself.

This means that all of our conflicts are the result of that prideful thought, “There is no God”.

Also, I think it is the “wicked” who, instead of fearing God by saying “there is no God” fearing others, use every way to make others fear them, and express it in their daily lives, big or small, knowingly or unknowingly.

I recently heard the term “grouchy harassment” or “silent harassment “. This is the act of trying to make someone feel uncomfortable or mentally distressed by using a grumpy attitude or behavior, or the silent intimidation of silence, when you feel you do not have the conditions to make people fear you.

It made me reflect on my own reflection: how clever people can be in expressing their pride that “there is no God”.

In many places, we human beings show the characteristics of the “wicked” who unknowingly embody “there is no God”.

The Hebrew word translated as “measure” in the phrase “the measure of the wicked” is “etiiah,” which does not refer to so-called “wickedness or serious crimes,” but to things that are deeply rooted in us and have become commonplace.

In other words, it refers to the habits, customs, and practices that are so deeply rooted, ingrained, and ingrained in our daily lives that they have become so commonplace that they are unrecognizable, and that we pretend to take for granted.

For example, “To be happy, you need money.”

In a sense, you could say that this is already a philosophy.

Money is important, money is power, money is authority, money is attractive, money is everything, money increases the likelihood of getting everything you want proportionally, etc. Even young children know the power of money.

But Jesus said, “Do not store up treasures on earth. Store up for yourselves treasures in heaven.”

“One of the most important factors for one’s happiness is one’s relationships. It is the facilitation of human relationships that counts.”

Or, “Taking care of your family is the most important thing you can do in your relationships,” the words of common sense.

Regarding this, Jesus also said, “He who loves a man more than Me, husband and wife more than Me, father or mother more than Me, son or daughter more than Me, is not worthy of Me. He who forsakes house, brother, father, mother, husband, wife, children, and field, for My sake and for the sake of the Gospel, shall receive many times more, and shall receive eternal life. Love God. And love others. Love God. Then you can love others,”

“Believe in yourself! Believing in yourself is the secret to living a happy life!” We see and hear things like this in many places. But Jesus tells us: “Blessed are those who recognize their own poverty before God. Blessed is everyone who waits for the Lord God. Love God. What we have believed in ourselves is dust of the ground. Beyond our belief in God is the self-affirmation before Him that is unshakable: ’To live is Christ, to die is gain.’”

The “measure of the wicked” refers to the things that the world and people who believe that “there is no God” list as necessary for one to be happy, common sense, and goals that seem to be taken for granted.

Hence, the “wicked” trust in their own wisdom.

They rely on their own cleverness.

They trust the knowledge they have accumulated.

“Why go to church? It’s a waste of time. Why waste time reading that stale Bible? In this age of civilization, which is more advanced than any other age in the past, an antiquated book like the Bible has been completely defeated and has fallen apart. There is nothing in it that you can learn, and instead of believing in God, you should believe in yourself,” is shouted everywhere in the world.

Furthermore, the language translated “the wicked” has the connotation of “insecurity”.

In other words, one of the characteristics of the “wicked” is that they are insecure.

It is an insecurity that is not solid, that is, it is an insecurity that is not known.

It is an anxiety that requires us to change our stored knowledge, to change our ideas, to live in constant uncertainty, according to the currents of the times.

It used to be thought that the atom was the smallest unit of matter, but that is no longer the case.

It is fortunate that we do not walk according to the common sense that changes from time to time and from case to case, or according to the pretense of normality, i.e., according to the judgment of the wicked.

Part Three

The second lesson of Psalm 1 is, “Do not stand in the way of sinners “.

The sinner lives for his body.

The goal is to eat, drink, and refuse nothing that his eyes desire, but to trust his heart, to enjoy all things according to his heart’s desire, and to enjoy whatever pleasures he thinks are pleasurable to him.

Of course, I am not advocating asceticism.

God, in Ecclesiastes,

Ecclesiastes 5:18-19 (PowerPoint)

He says, “Take great pleasure in that are in the land,” and what does He really mean by that?

Ecclesiastes 2:25 (PowerPoint)

The prodigal son in Jesus’ parable left home, thinking that he was free to enjoy being away from his father, to drink much, eat much, and wear much. But the more he sought debauchery, the more he left his father, the more he left his home, the more he was crippled, in bondage, entangled in a sense of emptiness and loss.

With this story, I think what Jesus is trying to teach us is that “freedom is to run to God, to turn and return,” that “depravity is to use the good things God has given us only for ourselves, not for God,” and that “debauchery is to go away from God.

People are allowed by God to enjoy the pleasures of drinking, eating, wearing, and living. God smiles when people rejoice through them. However, I believe that “if we are separated from God, the moment we think we have found happiness through drinking, eating, wearing clothes, and living, we will find that we are not happy.”

“Not to stand in the way of sinners who live for the flesh,” i.e., not to be separated from God and from Jesus, is an essential part of happiness.

And the third teaching is “not to sit in the seat of mockers.“

Who is the mocker?

The mocker would be those who find holiness and sacredness outside of the true God.

He who scoffs at believing in the one true God, who despises His teachings, His statutes, His judgments, His ways, and His judgments.

And those who proclaim such an attitude and posture of scorn, contempt, and disregard as self-expression are called scoffers, I believe.

The times when self-expression triumphs over God.

I think this is always true, and people have always done so.

But there is no happiness in self-expression without God.

The Bible tells us that only when we are with God and with Christ can we become who we are.

Conclusion

So far, Psalm 1:1 has spoken of the blessed man using the negative expression, “who does not walk, nor stand, nor sit,” but finally, in verse 2, it uses the positive expression to describe the blessed man.

Psalm 1:2 (PowerPoint)

One who rejoices, hums, and meditates on the Lord’s instruction.

A person who reverses the negative expression in verse 1, “who does not walk, stand, or arrive.”

In other words, a person who walks in the Lord’s teaching, stands in the Lord’s teaching, and arrives at the Lord’s teaching.

That person is the blessed one, according to God’s teachings.

It is not the happiness that man preaches, man seeks, man thinks, or man sets as his goal, but the happiness that God teaches.

Blessed is the man in whom God’s teaching becomes his joy.

I believe that it is not the work of man but God's work that makes God's teaching a joy.

I would like to pray that such a work of God will be the touch of Jesus Christ to our spiritual souls.

I hope that we will be blessed with the grace and fortune to rejoice in God's teachings.

Let' s pray.

Benediction: Psalm 1:1-2