

# Choosing Blessings in 2021

## Psalm 1

### Introduction

As we put 2020 in the rear-view mirror – many people are hoping to see a better year in 2021

Even if we can somehow put the Corona Virus behind us - - - Dr. Fauci – [Doctor of optimism] says we should not expect a return to normality until early Fall of this year

Don't throw out your mask just yet  
Don't let your toilet paper supply run low

How can we be blessed in 2021?

Martin Luther: 'The search for personal blessedness is common to all men. There is no one who does not desire to fare well or hate to fare badly. And yet all men, whoever they are, have strayed from the knowledge of true blessedness.'

Luther – says we are creatures who seek to be blessed - - - but we look for it in the wrong places

Proverbs 14:12 - 'There is a way which seems right to a man, but its end is the way of death.'

Claire – was a rather typical 14-year-old. She was somewhat shy and a little awkward. She also felt uncomfortable in her own body. She was experiencing what some call gender dysphoria [a discontent with one's gender] - - - She went surfing on the internet and came across a You Tube channel by Miles McKenna – a 22 year old Transgender. Claire – after listening to his pitch decided that perhaps her anxiety and unhappiness was due to the fact that she is really a boy trapped in a female body.

She – like most transgenders – began to think that she would feel better about life – if she could make the change. She began the transition process – beginning with certain hormone treatments. When her parents found out – they began taking her to a counselor – who then referred her to a therapist specializing in gender reassignment

Claire's parents were skeptical about some of the counsel - - - they felt that the psychological field was ignoring common sense – and experience - - - that many teenagers go through phases of discomfort or identity anxiety / etc.

As her mom put it: 'adolescence is fraught with uncertainty and identity searching.'

Yet – the experts were all telling Claire's parents that if a kid says he or she is trans – then they are trans. That's it – parents are to support such an idea.

Claire's parents stalled – when she began asking to have surgery to physically alter her body. They told her that these feelings about her gender would probably change over time. They also began limiting her access to the internet. And asked her to start keeping a journal.

Claire – now several years down the road and a tad bit wiser – says that last November – she changed her mind about the whole thing. She was standing in front of a mirror - - - and it began to sink in that she wasn't any happier trying to be a boy - - - that maybe she was a girl after all.

Claire's parents were grateful they did not listen to the experts – but instead patiently – steered Claire thru this period of uncertainty – encouraging her to be comfortable with the body God gave her

David once reflected

Psalm 139:14 - 'I will give thanks to Thee, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made . . . !

Our world – is forever in a quest for something . . . something we might call blessedness

Choices we make / actions we take

You may come to a fork in the road in 2021 – where you have to choose between A and B

How do you know which to choose?

Psalm 1 is a fitting way to begin the new year – because of its overarching theme of blessedness It comes to us and says: 'if you want to be blessed in your actions / choices / decisions'

The Blessed man / blessed woman:

- Avoids sin / does not heed sinful advice or counsel
- Delights in God's Word / listens to the truth

The One who does such things places themselves in the stream of God's blessing

## **I. The Blessedness of Avoiding Sin - v. 1**

This is a psalm about blessedness

To understand a passage like this – we need to remind ourselves of why the world is such a broken place – a place of un-blessedness – to begin with

It was due to sin – we can go back to the 3<sup>rd</sup> Chapter of Genesis – Adam and Eve

Randy Alcorn: 'The devil's first temptation of Eve and Adam demonstrates his attempt to persuade them to find greater happiness apart from God. That first human sin became the mother of all human unhappiness.'

Adam and Eve – were in a state of blessing – but fell from it - - - thru the choice to sin

That's the whole point of the biblical account – to explain where things went awry

Yet – humanity continues to try out the same formula over and over

Blessed = by definition means happy [Heb. Asher] – happy / fortunate

One person translated this as 'Congratulations' – if this is you

Other Blessed's in the Bible

Psalm 32:1 - 'How blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered!'

James 1:12 - 'Blessed is a man who perseveres under trial; for once he has been approved, he will receive the crown of life, which the Lord has promised to those who love Him.'

Matthew 5:6 - 'Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be satisfied.'

Psalm 1:1 - 'How blessed is the man who does not walk in the counsel of the wicked . . .'

Point: sin is not the way to blessedness [not in 2021 – not ever] – it never has been – never will be

The blessed man is the person who gets that

Sin leads only to ruin / to guilt / to folly / to brokenness / to loss / etc.

Max Lucado shares that he had just gotten a new smart phone - - - just upgraded from the flip phone

He said – he's always been cautious about using the internet - - - it is disturbing that one is always one or two clicks away from seeing images of women he has no right to see

Max: 'When it came to my first smartphone, well, I wasn't smart.'

He saw an image – he should not – and put the phone away – called his tech team – to see if they could put a filter on his phone for him - - - but they had left for the day

So he went home – His wife saw his new phone – ‘Oh a new phone’ – picked it up – opened the screen and the picture was still there!

The hurt was real on her face

The guilt was real for Max

Communication was tense

It was a cold, dark night - - - because that’s what sin does

Max said that Denalyn forgave him the next day – and he took measures to not go thru that again - - - which took place ten years ago

Max: 'No one makes it through life failure-free. No one. Peter didn't. Jacob didn't. King David didn't. Solomon didn't. I haven't and you won't. There is within each of us the capacity to do the very thing we resolve to avoid.'

There is only one remedy

I John 1:9 - 'If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.' [KJV]

That’s where we go when we stumble

But the wise man also keeps this truth before him: ‘How blessed is the man who does not walk in the counsel of the wicked.’

We make choices all the time that are related to blessing

‘I think it will serve my happiness to ignore God and to give in to sin’

I’m going to click on this web page that is filthy – or live in this immoral relationship – or watch this movie that is filled with garbage where they take the Lord’s name in vain - - - ignore what the bible says about anger and profanity

I’m going to forget about prayer and Bible reading – just focus on the news and other wholesome / uplifting sources of media

When it comes to blessing – those things do not take us there

There is a progression the Psalmist uses here - - - of involvement in sin – walking / standing / sitting

Sin is not content to just let you walk by - - - it wants you to sit down - - it wants you to become comfortable in the pig pen – it wants to wrap its coils around you like a Boa Constrictor

That’s why repentance and confession are important - - - if you start walking with sin - - - get out of there – don’t sit down – turn around and go the other way – replace the sin with something good – look to Jesus for grace to have victory

As long as we live in this world - - sin will show itself to be persistent and troublesome

If you have victory one day – it comes after you the next

The Blessed man knows where to stand / what to avoid / - - - he learns from his past mistakes - - he does not listen to the counsel of the wicked

How does he know these things?

His delight is found in the Word of God

## **II. The Blessedness of Delight in God's Word - vv. 2-3**

Here [vv. 2, 3] we find out: ‘What makes a Christian strong in the faith / rich in Christian character / wise in judgment / alert in battle?’

Answer: they feed and are nourished at the stream of God’s Word / they delight in God’s Word - - - while resisting and avoiding the counsel of the ungodly and the wicked

The blessed man / woman is someone who recognizes that this book has been given to them to bless them

God bestows the knowledge of Himself thru the Scriptures – thru His Word

It is here we learn about sin and judgment – and a Savior who died for us / rose again

Here we learn about the failures and victories of men and women of God who have gone before us – David / Moses / Peter / Ruth / Esther

We read it to become wise

We heed it – to become strong

We trust it – to become blessed

We meditate upon it – to let it seep into every aspect of our lives

We hide it in our heart – to defeat temptation

\*\*\* What shapes your thinking – will give shape to your life

The Psalmist does not say – ‘Blessed are those who know a verse or two in the bible’

He does not say: 'Blessed are those who are vaguely familiar with certain bible truths.'

No – they meditate upon or think upon God's Word

It is something they delight in

I like to give – every year in my Sunday school class – each kid a large Hershey bar

No one ever looks at me and says: 'Do I have to eat the whole thing?'

For some of them it's gone the first day

I can later ask: 'Did anyone have to tell you to eat your Hershey bar?' / it's time for your Hershey feeding?

No – it's something they go readily to – and enjoy it

That's to be our approach to God's Word – if we want to experience His blessings in the New Year

Instead – what do we commonly find in people's lives?

Some people approach God's Word like medicine that tastes bad but is good for you

Or some – simply take in as little as possible

I remember growing up – my younger brother had a phase where he was always asking – 'How many bites?' at the supper table

How many bites of veggies . . . ?

'Five' – then he would pick up one pea at a time – 'one . . .'

It was a different game if it were a pile of French Fries

I had another brother – who would hold his nose – while eating liver and onions – b/c he learned that you don't taste it as much if you plug your nose

That's just food but . . .

Some people approach God's Word that way

They want as little as possible

They can barely stomach what little they take in

And – says the Psalmist - - - they are cutting themselves off from blessings that could be theirs

The blessed position is 'delight' in God's Word

Jeremiah 15:16 - 'Thy words were found and I ate them, and Thy words became for me a joy and the delight of my heart.'

Psalms 119:162 - 'I rejoice at Thy Word as one who finds great spoil.'

It's like a treasure find

One tv show Christine and I like to watch is 'Storage Wars' - - - where people bid on abandoned storage units - - - it's all about the treasure - - - hoping to find that one item that will be a big dollar item / etc.

Sometimes their faces will light up when they find out something is worth a fair bit of money - - - and other times - they will be disappointed to find out something is just a piece of junk and worth very little

The blessed man recognizes - the bible is a treasure

They fill their mind with it

Because of this - they are planted / rooted

Tumbleweeds - lack roots into the ground - so they just blow about in the desert

We can be a tumble weed in 2021 - ignore God's Word - - - or we can be trees rooted

The largest living tree on the planet [volume wise] today is named the General Sherman Tree - one of the Redwoods or giant Sequoias in CA

The General is 275 feet tall - same height as the Iowa state capitol

Not an easy tree to climb - no branches until 130 feet up

This tree was alive when Jesus walked the earth - estimated to be around 2200 years old

The Giant sequoias only grow in one place on the entire planet - the Western slopes of the Sierra Nevada mountain range in CA - they get their water from the snow pack on mountain tops

In the history of the church - there is only one place where spiritually blessed people are produced

It is right here - in delighting in God's Word - feeding off of the stream that flows from the Word of God

Just as a tree draws strength and nourishment from a stream – so the godly draw strength and nourishment from God’s Word

The land around the tree may be quite dry - - but as long as you have this stream feeding your soul / you will not wither - but instead prosper

### III. The Non-Blessed Way - vv. 4-6

The wicked life might look impressive in this world – have a lot of worldly measurements of success about them

The wicked might be on the cover of Time and People – they might have a mansion in Malibu or a luxury home in Greenwich Village

They might be amongst the most influential in the world - - - but the Psalmist reminds us of the outcome of their life

‘the way of the wicked will perish’

For now – the wicked and the godless may seem substantial / important / influential - - - but in the end – they will be blown away like so much chaff

Kyle Yates: ‘The picture is that of a threshing floor on a hill top, where the wind clears away the chaff and leaves the grain.’

The point: Don’t look there for blessedness

Look here – at God’s Word – this is where true blessing is found

### Conclusion

Will you be blessed in 2021?

Delight in God’s Word

It will point you to a Savior who loved us and gave Himself for us

Jesus died for us – lived a perfect life for us – so we could be blessed thru faith in Him

There is another famous Redwood tree – it has been named *Hyperion* – it was actually discovered in 2006 - - - a whopping 380 feet tall . . . about 600 years old - - - it is believed that it would have grown taller but for damage caused by woodpeckers!

The more you set out to follow God and delight in His Word - - - There will be things to halt your progress / to hinder you / to divert you

The Blessed man – keeps coming back right here – to delight in God’s Word