

Intro to the Psalms

3/6/18

Psalms 1.1 add on - Delight

I'm trying to "practice what I preach" this week by meditating on Psalm 1. My Ethiopian friend talks about meditating as "chum-chum". It is munching on food or snack food. He describes it as rolling food around in your mouth. That is a good picture of meditating. I'm rolling Psalm 1 around in my thinking and in my conversations.

This morning we did that with a group of men. One of the ideas that came out was that a key thought in Psalm 1 is delighting. It seems to be the thing that separates the two types of people described in Psalm 1. The obvious question is, "What does it mean to delight in the law of the Lord?"

Let's try and break that down into a couple of components. First, what does it mean to delight? There are a number of words that express the idea of the English word "delight". One carries the idea of being delicate with, or a delicacy in a noun form. It is that which causes affection or fondness. It satisfies. The other is the idea of bending toward. It means to lean into or perhaps embrace. In the verb form it is to bend it, to move toward. It moves us. It is this second word that we find in Psalm 1:2. Delighting in something is to move steadily toward it or into it.

The psalmist is describing the difference between a person who sets his/her affection on the law of the Lord and one who sets his/her affection on other things. The contrast is great and it is vivid.

Setting our affection on something means that we don't let other things capture our affection. Three times the psalmist says this person does not. Delighting in something means there is a sense of exclusivity. We can only truly delight in one thing and all other delights become secondary to that primary affection. Jonathan Edwards in his classic book on religious affections talks about what we set our will to. He described them as "the more vigorous and sensible exercises of the inclination and will of the soul". They are the things that capture us in the truest sense, and they go beyond mere emotions. Often our affections conflict with more fleeting emotions that come and go. Gerald McDermott explains Edwards definition this way as "strong inclinations of the soul that are manifested in thinking, feeling, and acting." They are more than emotions, but not less.

The psalmist is saying that the man or woman who sets his affections on the law of God in such a way that it determines an action (meditation) is blessed as described by a tree planted by streams of living water. We will see this theme repeated throughout the Psalms, the life giving Word of God.

This brings some questions to my mind. What kind of people are we? Would the picture of a tree planted by streams of living water or chaff better describe us? What kind of people do we want to be? In what do we delight and why?

Let's meditate or chew on that this week!