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Expository sermon

June 2012

WHAT IS A GODLY FATHER?

Scripture Reading - Psalm 1.

I am sending an additional sermon this month to celebrate Fathers Day. I trust that it will a blessing to you.

Introduction

To be a father in this age is without doubt a challenge. Anyone who thinks that it is easy has never been a Father. To be a good father is not predicated on the amount of wealth we possess, power we enjoy or even the noble achievements in life. It is predicated on the kind of person we are. It rests on the integrity, strength of character and godliness of our lives. While there are great challenges there are also wonderful rewards. Father's day has been set aside to salute and honor our fathers and this is important. The father is God's gift to the family and is necessary

to developing a balanced family life. While the family does not expect the father to be a person of perfection, there is a very real sense in which they look up to him as a role model for living.

Children are very observant - They catch every attitude - watch every action and listen to every word spoken. This in itself is challenging. For everything we do and say are seeds planted in the fertile hearts and minds of our children. Small children especially interpret their father in simplistic terms, and make statements about them with disarming honesty, but generally without rancor or venom. They simply tell it like they see it. The point is they see it. The father of five children had won a toy at a raffle. He called his sons together to ask which one should have the present. "Who is the most obedient" he asked. "Who never talks back to mother?" "Who does everything she says?" Five small voices answered in unison. "You play with it daddy." It is amazing how observant they can be. One day a young mother and her kindergarten-age son were driving down the street. The inquisitive little boy asked, "Mom, why do the idiots only come out when Daddy drives." Fathers are generally very protective of their daughters and who they date and no man quite measures to

the daughter. One father said that “one of the great mysteries of life is how the idiot that your daughter married can be the father of the smartest grandchildren in the whole world. Be that as it may the father is important to the security and development of the family. He is to be the spiritual leader of the family not only in word but in deed. Above he is expected to be a godly father.

This an extremely challenging and even daunting task. Yet it is not an impossible task. The scripture outlines the possibility of living the godly life. The passage of scripture on which we are focusing sheds light on what a godly man is. Psalm 1 has something to say to the modern father about the wonderful possibilities of living the godly life. He does this by comparing the godly man with the ungodly man. The lifestyle of the man who is obedient to God is set alongside the lifestyle of the man who is disobedient to God. In doing so they are brought into sharp contrast. The contrast is also clearly defined by bringing together the first and last words of the Psalm. In verse 1 the word ‘blessed’ is highlighted, and in verse 6, the word “perish” is emphasized. Blessed or happy in the Hebrew is in the plural and it reads like this “O the happinesses” (while there is no such word in English) it does convey the state of the man who does

not participate in the sinful life. Blessedness or happiness is a direct result of obedience to God, whereas the word “perish” is the consequence of disobedience to God.

You will note that the Psalm begins with blessing and ends with an indictment. One has said is that at the end of the day human beings are basically of two kinds;

First they may be righteous; if so God protects their way.

Second they may be wicked, and for the wicked, the final destiny is doom.

One has rightly pointed out, that the doom of the wicked, as it is expressed in this Psalm, is not primarily a punishment, any more than the happiness of the righteous is a reward. Each is presented as the inevitable natural outcome or result of a chosen way of life. In other words what is sown in life will be reaped. It is clear then, that the fruit of obedience to God is happiness, and the consequence of disobedience to God is ultimately doom.

This is the inflexible and unchangeable law woven into our world system. You cannot change it. It is a timeless principle. There are always consequences to our actions. This briefly is the message of this Psalm. The man who is obedient to God will give evidence of that obedience and verses 1-3 describe the fruit of

obedience to God as Godliness. A Godly life is fundamental to a happy home. It is the basis for establishing a family with strong moral and spiritual values.

What then are the characteristics of the Godly man as described in Psalm 1? Note that this godly man,

1. DEMONSTRATED DISCERNMENT. Psalm 1:1-2.

The man in the psalm has obviously made an assessment of what life is all about, and on the basis of that assessment has chosen to go with God. He clearly saw with a piercing clarity what was of eternal value. There are two ways in which he demonstrates his discerning spirit. The first way is revealed in,

a. THE DIRECTION HE CHOSE IN LIFE. Psalm 1:1-2.

The Psalmist says in verse 1 “Blessed is the man who does not walk in the counsel of the wicked or stand in the way of the sinners or sit in the seat of the scornful, But his delight is in the law of God and on His law he meditates day and night.” The key words in this verse are “walking!” “standing!” “delighting!” and “meditating!” The sum of all of these things indicate the direction this righteous man took in life. This life style was not imposed upon him as some would have us think. The pathway he took was his choice, and choice determines direction and

character, and character ultimately determines destiny. This godly man's character was formed by four fundamental choices.

First note.

i. The God He Chose to serve. Psalm 1:2. "His delight is in the law of the Lord." Second

ii. The Discipline He Chose to Observe. Psalm 1:2. "His delight is in the Law of God." Third

iii. The Law He Chose to Make Part of His Life. Psalm 1:2.

"On His Law meditates day and night.." This indicates more than a daily cursory superficial reading of God's Word or a casual glance at its truth. "On God's law does he meditate day and night.

Finally note

iv. The people with whom he chooses to associate.

"He does not walk in the counsel of the wicked or stand in the way of sinners or sit in the seat of the mockers." What is meant here is that the godly man divorces himself from the lifestyle of the wicked. He does not participate in their wickedness. He does not actively take the counsel and advice of the wicked. He is not advocating isolation from the world, or totally cutting himself off from sinners. It simply means that he does not

actively participate in the ways of sin. The Godly man walks on a different pathway, with different priorities and will not engage in sinful activities. Solomon in the Book of the Proverbs 1:10,15-16, writes “My Son if sinners entice you, do not give into them, do not go along with them, do not set foot in their paths, for their feet rush into sin.” Happy is the man who does not participate in sinful ways. He is the man of great discernment. The discerning man chooses the way of the Godly in life. But further note

b. THE DESIRE HE CULTIVATES IN LIFE. PSALM 1:2. “His delight is in the Law of the Lord and on His law he meditates day and night.” He does not seek pleasure in the sinful pathways of sinners. His desire is the Word of God. He has an appetite for it. My father used to say “many like mini sermons because they have mini appetites”. The righteous man’s appetite is in the Word of God. He delights in the Law of the Lord. His enjoyment is in God’s word. The Psalmist wrote in Psalm 119:47 “I delight in your commands because I love them, and in verses 70-72 he continues, “I delight in your law. do not let me stray from your commands. The law from your mouth is more precious to me than a thousand pieces of silver and gold.” The prophet Jeremiah

gives the same testimony in his 15th chapter and verse 16 “When your words came I ate them, they were my hearts delight.”

Feeding on God’s word is indispensable to godly living. The Psalmist asks the question in Psalm 119:9-11, “How can man keep his way pure? By living according to your word. I seek you with all my heart; do not let me stray from your commands. I have hidden your word in my heart that I might sin against you.”

The righteous man delights in the law of God and this desire for God’s law leads him to make a diet of God’s word. On his law he meditates day and night. Primarily the law signifies the instruction that comes from God. The council of the ungodly cannot produce Godliness, and the advice of the wicked cannot yield the fruits of righteousness. What is clearly said, is that the Godly man does not seek counsel from the ungodly or the wicked, but from the Word of God. Man comes to live the godly life when he is immersed in the Word of God. The Godly man of this Psalm shows discernment by the direction he chooses and the desire he cultivates. Second note that

2. HE DISPLAYS DEPENDABILITY. Psalm 1:3.

The Godly man says the Psalmist, is “like a tree planted by streams of water which yields its fruit in season and whose leaf

does not wither. Whatever he does prospers.” What comes through here is that the righteous man is stable therefore dependable. Now because the righteous man is dependable he lives

a. DISTINCTIVE LIFESTYLE. Psalm 1:3. “...he is like a tree planted by the streams of water. The tree referred to is not a wild tree which grows on the plains scattered cross the tropical hinterland. This tree has been deliberately planted by the streams of water. The one who did the planting showed great discernment. He chose the place of planting well. This tree is planted - it is fixed - it is rooted by a stream. Then the Psalmist makes a comparison. The righteous man is like a tree planted by the streams of water.....not so the wicked! They are like the chaff which are tossed about by the wind and blown away. The tree planted by the water will be able to withstand, the storms, the wind and the sun. The chaff, however moves where the wind takes it. It has no resistance, and no stability and therefore no dependability. The wicked are not rooted anywhere. The truly righteous man is stable and therefore dependable. He is not in and out of the faith. Not spiritually hot one moment and cold the

next. Not carried away by every wind of doctrine. He is planted by the streams of water. He is different than the wild trees.

Furthermore the godly man is not only lives a distinctive lifestyle, he lives

b. DYNAMIC LIFESTYLE. Psalm 1:3 He is like a tree planted by streams of water which yields it fruit in season and whose leaf does not wither. Whatever he does prospers.” The Psalmist sees that the righteous man is dynamic in three ways. His life is marked by;

i. Productivity. Psalm 1:3. It “yields its fruit in season...” The secret of its fruitfulness lies in the fact that it is planted by streams of water not stagnant pools. The drought that brings barrenness does not affect this tree. It relies on the streams. They are an unfailing source of life and therefore it is able to produce fruit. Streams in the desert will produce fruit in the desert. The tree that is planted by the streams will yield fruit in season. A strong comparison can be made here with the words of Jesus to his followers; He said “if a man remains in me and I in him, he will bear much fruit.” He also made clear that, “Without me you can do nothing” It is in Him and from Him that we receive fruitful resources. He is the water of life. The fruit we bear will

be compatible with the life of Jesus. It will be the fruit of a Christ-like character. John the Baptist made it clear that we need to repent of sin and forsake sin and “produce the fruits of repentance.” Matthew 3:8. We are, said Paul, to yield the fruits of the Spirit which are. “love, joy peace; patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control.” The Godly man is dynamic because He yields fruit in season. His life is marked by productivity. It is also marked by.

ii. Vitality. Psalm 1:3. The Psalmist emphasizes this truth when he tells us that the leaves of the tree planted by the “streams do not wither.” They are full of life. There are two types of tree in my yard. There are the trees whose leaves fall in the autumn and then are those that have fresh pine needles. They are not affected by the frost, the snow or the blizzards. They are ever green. That is the picture of the righteous man. The Godly man is continually being filled with the life of God. His leaf does not wither. His life is marked by vitality. It is also marked by,

iii. Prosperity. Psalm 1:3. “Whatever He does prospers...” This is not just a reference to the gain of material prosperity, a secular doctrine which has invaded some of the church almost to the

point of obsession. The prosperity that we find in this Psalm is prosperity viewed from God's point of view. God is not a get quick rich source. The Psalmist talks about a prosperity that is important to God. It is possible that it may involve material gain. But primarily, it refers to the words and the deeds and life of a person generally. Note what the Psalmist says. It is what the "righteous man does that prospers." The prosperity that is born of righteousness has permanent value. There are treasures on earth but God is primarily concerned that with treasures stored in heaven. That is true prosperity. Finally the Godly man is one who has,

3. DISCOVERED HIS DESTINY. Psalm 1:6.

The Psalmist says in v.6 "The Lord watches over the way of the righteous, but the way of the wicked will perish." There are certainties in these words. i. The Lord watches over His own. ii. The way of the wicked will perish. The Psalmist draws the line between the way of the righteous and the way of the wicked. The intent is to reveal the ultimate consequence of the way of life in which a person chooses to walk. We must face up to the truth that there are consequences for every decision made and every action taken. Simply said "What we sow we reap."

Nothing we can do can change that. Each road has its separate ending or destiny. The Bible has always made this point. Jesus said that there are only two ways in life. There is the narrow way that leads to life and the broad way that leads to destruction. To walk in the way of righteousness is to walk in the way of security. "The Lord watches over His own." The security about which the Psalmist speaks has two faces to it. First of all,

a. THE AWARENESS OF AN IMMEDIATE SECURITY. Psalm 1:6.

What greater security is there than to know that the Lord watches over you? This is the root of his happiness. The Lord watches over me. J.C. Cariss in his own words tell how he remembered as a child it was necessary for him to return from school by the way of an old stone quarry. On winter evenings he frequently became terrified by odd-shaped boulders that seemed to him like horrible human monsters. On one particular evening he became so frightened that he ran back to the school master. He contacted his father, who came for him. Taking him by the hand, he walked with past the fearsome objects. And Cariss said that when he walked with him, he had no fear. He went on to say, that whenever during later years he became afraid of

the dangers alongside life's road, he remembered that there is someone who cares and protects him along the road. The righteous man does not listen to the advice of the wicked. He does not stand in the way of sinners neither does he sit in the seat of the scoffers. He walks in the way of righteousness conscious that the Lord is watching over him. He is aware of an immediate security. But there is also,

b. THE AWARENESS OF AN ULTIMATE OR FINAL SECURITY.

Psalm 1:6. Again the psalmist brings into sharp focus that "lord watches over the way of the righteous, but the way of the wicked shall perish." Men and women are destined to hell without God.

But the Lord Jesus Christ made it possible to have the deep certainty of the gift of eternal life. The Salvation Army Officer John Allen said "I deserved to be damned but God interfered." The Cross was that interference. Because Jesus died for us on a Cross - because He shed His Precious Blood - because he paid the supreme price on that Cross we can have eternal life and know it. Hunt made millions of dollars as a Texas oil man. He was an aggressive business man who had little regard for time. His chief confidant said he was just apt to call in the middle of

the night as he was to call in the middle of the day. One night Hunt called him at 2.00 a.m. and said, "John, I just made the greatest trade of my life. I traded the here for the hereafter."

That was the night Hunt became a Christian. Let me ask you "do you have that assurance?" The certainty and security of the Christian is that "The Lord watches over the way of the righteous..." The Godly man walks in this way.

Conclusion

As Fathers are we measuring up to what the Psalmist is talking about. Have we adopted the Psalmist values into our lives. The children are watching how we behave and listening to what we say. What priority does God and the attendance at his house have for you. What are you saying to them about God, and is your walk compatible with your talk. We must address this in our lives because how we live could influence their choices in life. A young man and his son were climbing a mountain. They came to a place where the climbing was difficult and even dangerous. The Father stopped to consider which way he should go. He heard the boy behind him say, "Choose the good path, Dad; I'm coming right behind you." What path have you chosen to follow? The path you choose could influence the children to go in the

same direction. Make sure it is a good path.