

BENEFITS TO YOU OF SPIRITUAL FITNESS
Psalm 1:1-4 (especially 3d)

INTRODUCTION:

Well, we are nearly one month into 2010. How are you doing on those resolutions? Anybody here who has broken one yet? Anyone who hasn't? It's hard to keep good resolutions. New Year's resolutions are a little like soap bubbles: easy to make and easy to break.

I've learned that the secret to success in keeping any resolution is to have your heart and mind set on the goal. That is as true for spiritual fitness as it is for physical fitness...maybe even more so. So do you still have your heart set on being fit for life? Do you still have your mind set on the advantages of being spiritually healthy?

In the very first psalm, the poet wrote about having your heart and mind focused on spiritual fitness. I want you to listen to what he said and then I want us to go back and highlight a few truths.

Psalm 1

¹ *Blessed is the man
 who does not walk in the counsel of the wicked
 or stand in the way of sinners
 or sit in the seat of mockers.*

² *But his delight is in the law of the LORD,
 and on his law he meditates day and night.*

³ *He 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.

⁴ *Not so the wicked!
 They are like chaff
 that the wind blows away.*

⁵ *Therefore the wicked will not stand in the judgment,
 nor sinners in the assembly of the righteous.*

⁶ *For the LORD watches over the way of the righteous,
 but the way of the wicked will perish.*

In the third verse of the first psalm, the lyricist wrote about success...prosperity...achievement. In the quest to be fit for this life, fit for eternal life and fit for the rest of our lives, Psalm 1:3 is a treasure trove of helpful hints. We are going to spend the next three weeks in verse 3. And today, we are going to pay special attention to the last phrase of verse 3 where the author says that there is a certain kind of person who, whatever he does, he prospers.

Wouldn't you like to know the key to that kind of success? We are going to learn it.

I. THE CRAVINGS

As I said last week, you can become spiritually fit for life but you really have to want to. One of the keys to prospering at whatever you do is that you really have to want to succeed.

Sometimes it is said of a successful sports team that they were just hungry for the title, the trophy or the championship ring. To hunger for something is to yearn for it, to long for it, to crave it.

What you crave the most, you will probably achieve. The psalmist says that the person who is blessed, who is most fortunate and most to be admired is the one who craves the Law of the LORD.

The person who is successful, as God measures success, is the one who delights in the Law of the Lord. Because what he desires, he will achieve. What he craves, he will obtain. What he values, he will acquire.

Sometimes when we talk about "The Law", particularly in reference to the Old Testament, we mean the Law of Moses: the Ten Commandments. Or, sometimes, the larger law that is the amplification and application of the Ten Commandments. But in this case, I think that when the psalmist wrote about delighting in the Law of the LORD, he was not so much referring to a specific set of statutes as he was pointing to the broader will of God: the mind of God and the heart of God. The person who is truly blessed is the one who delights in understanding God's will and in doing it.

I have often heard people say, "I know what the Bible says but I think..." and then they say something that proves that what the Bible says doesn't matter as much as what they prefer to believe. I have sometimes shared the Plan of Salvation, straight from God's Word, and had people respond that they don't think that all of it is all that very important. I have frequently listened as people argued against what they already had acknowledged to be God's final word on some issue or another.

So the question is, how do you respond to the Law of the LORD? Do you welcome it, accept it and embrace it? Do you want to know even more of the heart, mind and will of God than you already know? Do you crave the Law of the LORD? Those who will be truly blessed are the ones who do.

II. NOTE THE CONCENTRATION

Psalm 1 not only speaks to the craving of the blessed man, it also speaks to the concentration of the blessed man. The one who will enjoy God's

blessing on his life is the one who delights in the Law of the Lord and focuses his mind on it during the day and even at night.

*His delight is in the law of the LORD,
and on his law he meditates day and night.*

What are the subjects you are pursuing? What are you interested in learning about? What gets your concentrated attention?

I love dogs. I watch dog shows on TV and read books about dogs. I visit breed websites and look at pictures of dogs on the internet. I can talk to you about the differences between an English Setter, an Irish Setter and a Gordon Setter. Want to talk terriers? We can discuss Cairn Terriers, Norfolk Terriers, Norwich Terriers and Sandy's favorite, the West Highland White Terriers. I have learned about dogs because I love them and I have turned a lot of my attention to them over the years.

What about you? What are you interested in? What gets your attention? What do you think about, ponder on, turn over in your mind? Upon what do you meditate day and night?

What about when you aren't concentrating on something, what do you think about then? When your mind wanders, where does it go? When you allow your thoughts to drift, to what subjects do they naturally turn? That can say a lot about you, you know.

The man whom the psalmist describes as the blessed man is the one who delights in the Law of the LORD and who meditates on it day and night. He not only craves the heart and mind of God, he concentrates on it.

I want to give you a very easy and very practical suggestion: read through your Bible some and then pick out a fairly short section of Scripture that you can write out on a 3 X 5 file card. Copy that short section of Scripture and put that in your purse or your pocket. Then think about that passage of Scripture during the day.

- When you are at a traffic light, pull it out and read it then as you drive on, think about what it says and what it means.
- When you are waiting in the checkout line at some store, get that card and read it again, put it back in your purse or pocket and then just consider the implications of what you read.
- While you wait for your computer to boot up or when you are on hold on the telephone, read those words from the Bible and then reflect on the impact it can have on your life.

The person who will be blessed with spiritual fitness is the one who concentrates on the Law of the LORD: on the mind of God.

III. NOTE THE CONSEQUENCE

The person who wrote the first psalm says that if a person craves the Law of the LORD and concentrates on it, he will be prosperous in everything he does. Hear these words again:

¹ *Blessed is the man
who does not walk in the counsel of the wicked
or stand in the way of sinners
or sit in the seat of mockers.*
² *But his delight is in the law of the LORD,
and on his law he meditates day and night.*
³ *He 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.*

Now when you hear or read those words, how do you react? Do you kind of say, "Yeah, but it doesn't really mean what it says. It doesn't really mean that **whatever** he does prospers. It just means that God will be satisfied with him."

Or maybe you respond by thinking, "Sure. It sounds good but what about the fine print? What about all the conditions you have to meet, all the provisions you have to satisfy and all the exceptions you have to consider? It can't really mean **whatever** he does prospers."

Or perhaps you discount that promise as just religious talk and it doesn't really apply to everyday life.

I want you to know that what the psalm says is true. It means exactly what it says. If you delight yourself in the Law of the LORD and if you meditate on it day and night, whatever you do will prosper. The psalmist can make that confident assurance because of what he knows...because of what God has revealed to him.

If you concentrate on the Law of the Lord, that will shape your thought, your desires and, therefore your actions. If find your delight in the Law of the Lord, you will seek to know more and more about it and that will shape your thoughts, your desires, and therefore your actions. You won't be thinking the same things you used to think. You won't be enticed by the same things that used to entice you. You won't be doing some of the same things you used to do, either.

Instead, you will think like God thinks. You will desire what He desires. You will do what He would do.

This promise of prosperity in Psalm 1 is very like the one in Psalm 37:4. That is a psalm of David and David wrote:

*Delight yourself in the LORD
and he will give you the desires of your heart.*

It is a perversion of that promise to take it to mean that if you really, really, really are delighted in God that He will give you anything your little heart desires. That is so shallow and so selfish. No, the proper understanding of the text is that if you find your utmost delight in the LORD, He will give you new desires in your heart.

When I was young, we used to sing a chorus by Stanton W. Gavitt that went something like this:

*Things are different now, something happened to me
Since I gave my heart to Jesus
Things are different now, I was changed it must be
Since I gave my heart to Him
Things I loved before have passed away
Things I love far more have come to stay
Things are different now, something happened that day
When I gave my heart to Him*

People, that is the way it is when you delight in the Law of the Lord and meditate on it day and night. Things you loved before will pass away and things you love far more will come to stay – so that your heart is fueled by new desires and whatever you do prospers. But not the temporary prosperity of this world's material goods; the eternal prosperity of treasures in heaven.

CONCLUSION:

So, my friends, upon what have you set your mind and your heart? In Colossians 3: 1 & 2, Paul tells us that if we have set our hearts and minds on the things above, when Jesus Christ appears on earth, we will appear with him in glory. That future will be ours when we become fit for life.

The benefit to you of being spiritually fit is that whatever you do will prosper. You will be an achiever. You will be successful. You will thrive. And you will do it in exactly the ways God wants you to because His desires will have become your desires, His thoughts will have become your thoughts and His will will have become your will.

INVITATION: #561 – “I Would Be Like Jesus”