

Psalm 1:1 Blessed is the man who walks not in the counsel of the wicked, nor stands in the way of sinners, nor sits in the seat of scoffers; 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 that yields its fruit in its season, and its leaf does not wither. In all that he does, he prospers. 4 The wicked are not so, but are like chaff that the wind drives away. 5 Therefore the wicked will not stand in the judgment, nor sinners in the congregation of the righteous; 6 for the LORD knows the way of the righteous, but the way of the wicked will perish.

This is a fairly simply worded Psalm, but with many possible misunderstandings of what it means. Let's consider some of the personal, religious, biblical and theological nuances that help us properly understand it.

1. INTRODUCTION TO CONTEXTS

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RELIGIOUS CONTEXT, (how it's been interpreted today)

BIBLICAL CONTEXT (how OT, NT authors write about blessings and curses)

WESTMINSTER'S THEOLOGICAL CONTEXT (how Westminster pastors write about the law and blessings and curses)

2. IN LIGHT OF THESE CONTEXT CONCERNS ABOVE, WHAT DO THE PHRASES OF PSALM 1 MEAN?

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WHY DOES LAW-NOURISHMENT PROTECT FROM THE INFLUENCES OF THE WICKED?

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I. INTRODUCTION TO CONTEXTS

A. PERSONAL CONTEXT issues that shape our understanding of Psalm 1

What's the storyline of your life? Do you measure life as living under the suspicious and condemning watch of God and his law of *quid pro quo*, I obey and God blesses me, or I disobey and God punishes me?

Or does this Psalm seem unrealistic, with little evidence of these blessings or judgments in daily life? We wrestle with how literally to understand these promises, or the meaning of the words themselves.

What does "prosper" mean, and how does show up in "all that he does"?

How does law meditation turn into blessings?

What is the law?

Does this Psalm contradict other Bible texts? Isn't our mediation supposed to be on Jesus Christ and him crucified, looking to Jesus the author and perfecter of our faith (1 Cor. 2:2; Heb. 12:3)?

What are fruits in season and unwithering leaves?

How do we square the phrase that 'sinners can't stand in the congregation of the righteous' when we know stories of hypocrites who looks righteous all their lives only to be exposed as a fraud after death?

B. RELIGIOUS CONTEXT issues that shape our understanding of Psalm 1

First, in our **gender-sensitive culture**, we notice the masculine singular used throughout Psalm 1. If you've studied the Bible for some length of time, you realize this a just a general English usage to represent both men and women. However, we should resist attempts to neutralize the gender of a Biblical text since translations should try to preserve accuracy rather than trying to interpret the text, which is the job of commentaries, books and preachers-teachers.

Second, the absolute contrast between the curses on the wicked and the blessings on the righteous in Psalm 1 may seem to lend support for a form of false teaching or imbalanced teaching in the visible churches that we sometimes call **the health-wealth Gospel**. This teaching supposes that God intends to heal all our sicknesses in this life and financially prosper our households. All we need to get these benefits is adequate faith to claim these benefits (sometimes called, "name-it, claim-it" by its critics). Historically these teachings have been associated with some charismatic church leaders (like Benny Hinn, I went to one of his meetings in Taipei about 30 years ago and studies some of his books), or prosperity Gospel preachers like Joel Osteen (I've listed to several of his sermons and reviewed contents of some of his books since they are published in Chinese in Taiwan). These teachers fail to bring biblical counterbalance to such promises with the nuances of other biblical texts explaining the continuing realities of sin's punishments in this world (Gen. 3:14-19; Ecclesiastes, Romans 8:17-39).

The misuse of the biblical promises about blessings by some might be a partial reason why the Reformed churches mute or neglect proper teaching on what blessings we may properly expect in this life. Further,

Reformed interpretive principles tend to spiritualize such blessings as only being fulfilled in relation to God, rather than considering any earthly blessings in relation to the material world or human relationships. Another possible reason is that the Westminster Standards lack a clear statement about what blessings we may expect in this life, while it does have a clear statement of what are the punishments of sin in this life (WLC 28). SO, we come to Psalm 1 and need to try to bring balance to the biblical discussion of sin's punishments and the blessings we might expect from obedience. Both sides of the balance are mentioned with brief summaries and metaphors in Psalm 1.

C. BIBLICAL CONTEXT issues that shape our understanding of Psalm 1

First, we should note that the theme of blessing for obedience is a prominent biblical theme, such that Psalm 1 is not a rare text, but a typical text. The most detailed list of blessings for obedience and curses for disobedience are enumerated in Deuteronomy 28. The long list of Deuteronomy 28:15-68 curses for disobedience are the cited footnote in WLC 28. Perhaps the themes of that text are the tipping point for all the idealized blessings promised in Psalms, Proverbs. These promises are also the point of frustration for the author of Ecclesiastes and misused in a strict application of those ideas by Job's three friends to condemn Job ('God blesses the righteous and curses the wicked, thus, Job you are experiencing serious curses and punishments in the Deuteronomy 28:15-68 list, therefore God has punished you for some sins that you are not telling us about').

What types of similar teachings are found in the OT?

From one perspective we are reading about an idealized experience of blessing in the context of Israel's geo-spatial, religious obedience in the promised land. The fruitful agricultural metaphor is representative of the conquest-inheritance of the land and the farming of its produce. Psalm 1 uses contrasts between the righteous and the wicked, both representing possible wickedness of some of Jacob's blood descendants as well as the unrepentant foreign nations not yet driven out of Canaan (consider the Judges and the preparation of anointing a king over Israel to war against the Philistines and wicked Israelites as chaff to be blown away and perish). Given this idealized context, we could compare Psalm 1 with the virtuous woman of Proverbs 31, since she embodies a similar style of meditation on and living out the moral law and being blessed for righteousness. Everything she did prospered because she was in a socio-religious context that shared her values and affirmed her in receiving the spiritual, relational and material reward and benefits due to her righteous labors within a land where the Lord also vowed his blessed kingdom protections and flourishing that reach their initial climax during the reign of Solomon.

We must put on our biblical theology spectacles and ask whether these OT blessings promised to the Old Testament saints living in the Promised Land extend to the NT era.

By the NT era, we have a new socio-political reality, living under Roman law, an ungodly idolatrous regime with blood lust for the death battles in the Colosseum. Obedience to God's law is not a pathway to obvious 'prospering' in the socio-religious culture revealed in the Gospels and Acts. The Pharisees and religious leaders were much more concerned about preserving their power than obeying the 6th commandment not to kill an innocent man like Jesus. More likely, meditating on and delighting in the true meaning of God's moral law will be a pathway to persecution.

However, we also have clear repetition of the law's promised blessings for the 5th commandment in Ephesians 6:1-3: Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right. "Honor your father and mother"

(this is the first commandment with a promise), “*that it may go well with you and that you may live long in the land.*” If Paul feels no need to mute this promise, neither should we.

Furthermore, since this phrasing is part of the wording of the Ten Commandments (Exod. 20:1-17), the Westminster pastors felt justified in noting the blessings and curses of the moral law as one of its interpreting principles. WLC 99:4 “That as, where a duty is commanded, the contrary sin is forbidden; and, where a sin is forbidden, the contrary duty is commanded: so, **where a promise is annexed, the contrary threatening is included; and, where a threatening is annexed, the contrary promise is included.**”

Jesus’ Sermon on the Mount (Matt 5-7) teaches similar themes using other metaphors. “**Blessed** are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be satisfied,” (Matt 5:6). Food and water metaphors are day and night physical hungers and thirsts. Understood as a trait of all living creatures, hunger and thirst for righteousness day and night are like meditating on the law of the Lord, both day and night and experiencing its contentment and satisfaction. Or in a more familiar NT metaphor, “But seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things [length of life, food, drink, clothing] will be added to you,” (Matt. 6:33).

D. WESTMINSTER’S THEOLOGICAL CONTEXT

1. **THE USES OF THE LAW FOR ALL MEN:** to show us God’s nature and will, our duties to God and man; to be humbled by our sinful inability to keep it, how much we need a Savior who kept the law for us; WLC Question 95: Of what use is the moral law to all men? Answer: The moral law is of use to all men, to inform them of the holy nature and will of God, and of their duty, binding them to walk accordingly; to convince them of their disability to keep it, and of the sinful pollution of their nature, hearts, and lives; to humble them in the sense of their sin and misery, and thereby help them to a clearer sight of the need they have of Christ, and of the perfection of his obedience.
2. **BLESSINGS IN KEEPING THE LAW:**
 - a. Question 133: What is the reason annexed to the fifth commandment, the more to enforce it? Answer: The reason annexed to the fifth commandment, in these words, That thy days may be long upon the land which the Lord thy God gives thee, is an express promise of long life and prosperity, as far as it shall serve for God’s glory and their own good, to all such as keep this commandment.
 - b. We see the same principle used in WLC 193 explaining the phrase of the Lord’s Prayer, “give us today our daily bread”: Question 193: What do we pray for in the fourth petition? Answer: In the fourth petition (which is, Give us this day our daily bread), **acknowledging**, that in Adam, and by our own sin, we have forfeited our right to all the outward blessings of this life, and deserve to be wholly deprived of them by God, and to have them cursed to us in the use of them; and that neither they of themselves are able to sustain us, nor we to merit, or by our own industry to procure them; but prone to desire, get, and use them unlawfully: we pray for ourselves and others, that both they and we, **waiting upon the providence of God from day to day in the use of lawful means, may, of his free gift, and as to his fatherly wisdom shall seem best, enjoy a competent portion of them; and have the same continued and blessed unto us in our**

holy and comfortable use of them, and contentment in them; and be kept from all things that are contrary to our temporal support and comfort.

3. PUNISHMENTS AGAINST SIN IN THIS LIFE (includes and the effects of sin on all people, not necessarily a punishment for our own sin. It also includes those who willfully sin, the sinners, scoffers and the wicked): The WLC explanation of *lex Christi* curses in this life (WLC 28) contains an interplay between spiritual-relational-material curses, that is undeveloped in our applicational constructs. Notice how the Westminster pastors used a *lex Christi* format to structure the curses, the inward related to God and our inward attitude to the world (1st-4th Cs, 10th C) and the outward related to man and creation (4th – 9th Cs).

The punishments of sin in this world are either inward, as blindness of mind,¹ a reprobate sense,² strong delusions,³ hardness of heart,⁴ horror of conscience,⁵ and vile affections;⁶ or outward, as the curse of God upon the creatures for our sakes,⁷ and all other evils that befall us in our *bodies, names, estates, relations, and employments*; together with death itself.

28 問：罪在現今生所帶來之懲罰是什麼？

答：罪在現今生所帶來之懲罰有：

(1) 內在之懲罰：如悟性之混淆 (弗 4:18)，被棄之感覺 (羅 1:28)，強烈之妄想 (帖後 2:11)，心靈之剛硬 (羅 2:5)，良心之懼怕 (賽 33:14；創 4:13；太 27:4)，和情之感之卑劣 (羅 1:26)。

(2) 外在之懲罰：如上帝因我們犯罪之緣故咒詛世界 (創 3:17)，有各樣之災難臨到我們之身體、名譽、財產、關係和職業 (申 28:15 – 18)，還有死亡 (羅 6:21, 23)。

The italicized words above are clearly a reference to the curses related to people in relation to other people in their lived geospatial, agricultural, socio-cultural-political environment, each word derived from specific commandment in the second tablet of the moral law. WLC 28 cites Deuteronomy 28:15-68 for these words. Below are some of the relational-material implications joined with the specific commandments. The Lord punishes disobedience to the *lex Christi* with the exact corresponding sorrows of the 4th-9th Cs of human misery, ruin and destruction (Deut. 28:20, 37, 63):

- *bodies* (6th C), cursing their mortal longevity and making them barren and bereft.⁸
- *names* (9th C), cursing their reputations among all the nations of their exile.⁹

¹ Blindness to God and his glory (contra 1st C & 4th C Sabbath instruction about God; Eph. 4:18; 2 Cor. 4:5).

² God gives them up to sins against all the *lex Christi* (Rom. 1:28).

³ They believe delusions, lies, false religions, calling on the names of false gods (contra 2nd & 3rd Cs; 2 Thess. 2:11).

⁴ Jews, knowing the content of the moral law, fail to accurately assess their own coveting, theft and adultery, and do not repent (Rom. 2:5, 21-22).

⁵ Feel the deep self-loathing and suicidal thoughts that come from knowing the moral law and one's guilt before a holy God who promises judgment fire against law-breakers (Isa. 33:14; Gen. 4:13; Matt. 27:4)..

⁶ Cites the example of God giving them up to homosexual lusts (contra 10th C; Rom. 1:26).

⁷ Relational-material curse; cites God's curse on the ground due to Adam's sin (Gen. 3:17) and all that happens to the creation and creatures and their relation to man because of this curse.

⁸ Deut. 28:18, 20-22, 26-29, 35, 48-57, 59-62, 65-67

⁹ Deut. 28:37

- *estates* (8th C), cursing their material resources, uprooting them from the land.¹⁰
- *relations* (5th C), cursing their familial-prophet-priest-king-geopolitical relationships,¹¹ (7th C) cursing their marital pleasure.¹²
- *employments* (4th C, six days labor, one day rest), cursing their agricultural synchrony, afflicting their land, sending wild beasts and serpents against them, taking away their place of rest.¹³

Direct curses from the Lord combine with curses from the creatures and creation as representatives causing chaos and evil to us and others. There are irreducibly complex synergies related to God's giving men up to anti-*lex Christi* rebellion: the violence, sickness and hardships caused by the inhospitable world, the physical world of creatures, germs and viruses against us, the fallen angels, our minds and consciences, our bodies within our space-time-seasons and environments, our assembly-related socio-political reputations, our familial-prophet-priest-king-geopolitical relationships, and our labors to manage assets & property belonging to others and ourselves.¹⁴

Through all these earthly punishments of sin common to all mankind, the elect have a different experience and interpretation of them. Lord removes the *covenant-enmity* experience and calls them Father-loving-child-disciplines for sharing his holiness (Heb. 12:6-14; 11:23-26). The Father, through the priestly ministry of the Son binds himself to his elect people with his Spirit's comforting *covenant-reconciliation* attributes.¹⁵ And these are most often felt through God's providential supply of representatives who reflect derivative forms *covenant-reconciliation* affections to us in *relational-material* ways for our *spiritual* benefit.¹⁶

If the curses are inward, in the soul in relation to God, and outward, in the lived body in relational-material experience, then the blessings of obedience must be experienced in both inward and outward forms. WLC lacks a corresponding statement of the blessings of obedience in this life. Ultimately, these outward *relational-material* blessings, no matter how apparently trivial or commonplace, should be our usual pathway to the inward-*spiritual* in relation to God. By adding another question and answer using the "inward-outward" structure of WLC 28, we can illustrate the spiritual-relational-material blessings that come through *lex Christi* righteousness.

¹⁰ Deut. 28:17, 30-31, 63; 29:28

¹¹ Deut. 28:16, 25, 32-34, 36, 41, 43-44, 48-57, 68. The LORD will make them jealous and provoked to anger by saving other unworthy fools from among the Gentile nations (Deut. 32:21; Rom. 10:19).

¹² Deut. 28:30, 53-57

¹³ Deut. 28:16, 22-24, 65; 29:22-23, 27, 38-40, 42

¹⁴ Isaiah 10:6-7 provides an example of the Lord judging Israel's rebellion by a wicked nation overthrowing Israel, destroying and stealing their resources, raping, enslaving and killing.

¹⁵ Rom. 8:18-39; Heb. 4:14-16

¹⁶ Rom. 12:9-13; 2 Cor. 1:3-11; 7:6-7; 1 Thess. 2:11-14; 5:14; Eph. 6:4; Phil. 4:10-20

II. IN LIGHT OF THESE CONTEXT CONCERNS ABOVE, WHAT DO THE PHRASES OF PSALM 1 MEAN?

A. WHO IS THE BLESSED MAN?

1. The Blessed “MAN” is not defined as only males, but included women and children of Jacob. This “MAN” would include people from all mankind, all the Gentiles who later come to stand in the congregation of the righteous, male and female, though in the context of the temple worship, there are limits on how near the Gentiles may approach in their worship of God. No matter your past sins, **EVERYONE** from all nations is welcome to participate in the assembly of the righteous and experience its blessings!

B. HOW IS MEDITATION ON THE “LAW” SIMILAR TO BEING PLANTED BY the “WATER”?

1. This man receives life-sustenance outside himself, using the metaphor of a tree planted near water. Nearness to water is a metaphor of constant mental nourishment from the law of the Lord.

2. **What is the law/teaching of the Lord?** If the Torah (law/teaching) here means the entire Pentateuch, including the history of God’s person and works for Israel, and his actual Ten Commandments and related laws (we could say, this is the symphonic pedagogical meaning of the “law of the Lord”).

a. *Symphonic Iex Christi and attributes*: Using this definition, we also have a prioritized text before the giving of the moral law in Exodus 20:1-17; Deuteronomy 5:6-21, such that the preface to the moral law (Exod. 20:2; Deut. 5:6, “I AM the Lord who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery”) serves as a heading for all the history recorded in the Pentateuch.

b. *Symphonic morality and symphonic commandments* perspectives: The entire Mosaic moral, civil and ceremonial laws is no doubt included, but the OT itself puts these in tiered relationships, with the moral law directly given to Moses and written on stone tablets kept in the ark of the covenant shows that the rest of the laws are subordinate applications of these Ten Commandments.

3. WHY DOES LAW-NOURISHMENT PROTECT FROM THE INFLUENCES OF THE WICKED?

a. **The counsel of the wicked**, anyone, leader, follower or equal, who gives one of God’s people prescriptive advice against the moral law. God’s people, knowing the path of true blessing and being desirous of it and attracted to it, are not persuaded to walk in that counsel.

b. **The way/path of sinners**, the practices of moral law disobedience. God’s people, knowing the way of true blessings do not stand among these unrighteous.

c. **The seat of scoffers**, any who, filled with pride and self-determination of truth, reject moral law counsel, but because they are seated together with other likeminded scoffers, are immovable, unteachable, will not take righteous actions. God’s people, knowing their seated king on Zion, listen and are taught by this king’s law.

d. The blessed man’s thoughts are directed by the law of the Lord, rather than the words and actions of the wicked, sinners or scoffers, as **his life derives great pleasure living by this law/teaching**. He finds obedience to it attractive and joyful, “his delight is in the law of the

Lord” and his thoughts enjoy reflecting on this law 24-7 “meditating on it day and night”. “Whatever he does” implies he does everything in obedience to the supra-pedagogical, supra-discipleship structure of the Pentateuch, knowing God and his works, as well as his moral law duty.

4. WHAT KINDS OF BLESSING CAN WE EXPECT? ASSEMBLING A BIBLICAL STATEMENT OF Spiritual, Relational, Material BLESSING

The WLC 152-196 means of grace (the Word, sacraments and prayer) as our pathway to change highlights a spiritual dimension of communion with God through these means. **As a result, Reformed believers tend to hear teaching and preaching that emphasizes the inner spiritual life and the promise of a spiritual place called heaven.** OT typologies of long life in a promised land find their fulfillment in Christ’s redemptive work of forgiveness and justification. There is a strong tendency to affirm an eschatology of this world’s destruction and replacement. Christ-centered preaching has come to mean a sermon’s conclusion focused on the passive elements of justifying faith, while neglecting the more complex discussions of sanctifying faith in all our places of assembly, creation and diaspora.

Some may fail to see Westminster’s *lex Christi spiritual* blessings were just as present in the OT era as in the NT era. The OT saints were saved by looking beyond the OT typologies embodied in offices of prophet, priest, king, and beyond the physical symbols of blood, gold and bronze and wood to their antitypical *spiritual-blessing* fulfillment in Christ in a temple not built by human hands.¹⁷ However, we are more likely to miss Westminster’s implication that *lex Christi relational-material* blessings are still as present in the NT era, as they were in the OT. We must back up a bit and first trace the *covenant-enmity* curses before we can compare the *covenant-reconciliation* blessings.

The blessed man knows the blessings that come from moral law obedience, *the Lord granting fruitful longevity, social stability* to those who are obedient to his law “the Lord knows the way of the righteous” v. 6. These general themes of moral law flourishing define everything he does (as in Prov. 31:10-31 the virtuous woman).

This man is **blessed**: He is like a tree planted by streams of water that yields its fruit in its season, and its leaf does not wither. In all that he does, he prospers. This contrast enables him to “stand in the congregation of the righteous”; THE LORD KNOW THE WAY OF THE RIGHTEOUS.

Catechism 2 (again)

Q2: What are the blessings of *lex Christi* obedience in this life?

A2: In this world still under the creational-providential post-fall curses, all blessings related to restoration of Christ’s *lex Christi* rule in us and in the entire creation are sourced from the Father and come to us through mediate representatives. Exact representatives are Christ, the Spirit and God’s Word, approximate representatives are creation order, angels, man, creatures. These blessings are inward, in the soul, such as mutually synergistic peace of conscience toward God and his law in union

¹⁷ WCF 7:5; 8:6; Mark 14:58; Heb. 8:2; 9:11

with Christ, adoption to sonship, spiritual discernment, renewed holy affections and hope of glory (1st-3rd Cs).¹⁸ These blessings are outward, in the multi-sensory body,¹⁹ experiencing material-relational blessings in time-space synchronies (4th C), physical bodies (6th C), material resources on a portion of this earth (8th C), relationships (5th authority-submission; 7th C marriage, family) and reputations (9th C). We respond to these inward and outward glory-blessings revealed *to* us, *on* us, and *in* us with a legitimate derivative happiness that must be disciplined with thankful contentment (10th C). These all combine to nurture our chief and highest purposes to glorify and enjoy God (1st-3rd Cs; WLC 1). Further, these blessings must be reflected *by* us to others, while awaiting their eternal perfection in the new heavens and new earth and the removal of the punishments of sin in this world.

The metaphors of Scripture also beg this approach: “taste and see that the Lord is good” through the abundance of material pleasures that he provides, since the creation reveals reflections of his eternal power and divine nature.²⁰ Thus, if today, the Lord continues to graciously provide our daily bread in answer to our prayers, we should be content and thankful, glorifying God for his material goodness.²¹ These blessings come through other representative *persons* in our social-geospatial environments and *creation* in the climate and agriculture. This is especially evident in families of believers, fathers and mothers daily revealing covenant-reconciliation blessings to their children. This is one primary application of creation revealing his eternal power and divine nature that should result in honoring him as the source and giving him thanks.²² If, today, we are graciously given life, breath and all things, a God-appointed life-span among the nations of our habitation, we must worship him rightly through faith-union with Christ by the Spirit.²³ God will daily give us “all things” (Rom. 8:32), actually a complex, interdependence of spiritual-relational-material blessings, to work out all things for our good, everything required for his providential accomplishment of our all that union with Christ entails in a creation still suffering under the curse, until that curse and our groaning is finally removed.²⁴

This *covenant-reconciliation* blessing includes the bodied-souls whom God provides as spiritual guides on our pilgrim’s progress.²⁵ This includes the many material (including the digital) forms of Scripture in multiple languages now available to the saints, as the Lord has blessed the church with new computerized media and online access to his Word. The Word, as a means of grace, provides us the primary presuppositional knowledge. The Spirit vivifies that knowledge to effectual call into *supra-pedagogical* wisdom: the practice of relational union and communion with the God whom Scripture reveals and blessed or cursed relationships with the creatures and the creation that Scripture reveals.

¹⁸ WLC 83 explanation of ‘communion with Christ in glory in this life’ has some parallels with the inward blessings noted above: “The members of the invisible church . . . enjoy the sense of God’s love, peace of conscience, joy in the Holy [Spirit], and hope of glory . . .”

¹⁹ In addition to the normally accepted five senses of sight, taste, touch, hearing and smell, we also have various other “__ceptions” *Equilibrioception* – a sense of balance. *Proprioception* – knowing which parts of your body are where without looking; *Kinaesthesia* – sense of movement; *Thermoception* – we know whether our environment is too cold or too hot; *Nociception* – the ability to feel pain; *Chronoception* – how we sense the passing of time, *Magnetoreception* – the ability to detect magnetic fields; and additional sensations of itch, muscle tension, pressure, stretch (bladder, stomach, lungs, intestines), chemoreceptors (poisons, drugs, hormones), thirst and hunger, <https://www.hellahealth.com/blog/wellness/humans-five-senses/> accessed December 5, 2022.

²⁰ Ps. 34:8; Acts 14:17; 1 Tim. 4:3-5; Rom. 1:20

²¹ Matt. 6:11; 1 Tim 6:8

²² Rom. 1:20-21; Acts 14:17

²³ Acts 17:24-31; Rom. 6:5; 8:14

²⁴ Rom. 8:14-39; Rev. 21:3-4; WCF 3:6

²⁵ 1 Cor. 3:21-23; 4:15-17; 1 Thess. 5:12-13

The *enjoyment* of all these combined spiritual-relational-material blessings should be part of what it means to glorify God and enjoy him forever (WLC 1). By enjoying the outward, the relational-material, we are drawn to enjoyment of the inward, the spiritual, enjoying God forever.

III. PRACTICAL IMPLICATIONS OF PSALM 1

A. WHAT KIND OF MEDITATION ON THE LAW PRODUCES BLESSINGS?

1. At first reading it may seem like Psalm 1 is teaching legalism: Obey God's law and God will bless you. There is more to the story.
2. **Mediating on the only blessed man, into whom all others are united by grace.** Adam failed to obey God's law in Eden. God instituted types and symbols for their faith to trust in the perfect law-keeping, sacrificed-for-non-law-keeping elect, risen Messiah. Christ kept the covenant of works that Adam failed to keep. He delighted in the law of the Lord and united us to himself. The Reader/hearer of Psalm 1 can only delight in law-obedience because of the providential election of the Father in Christ by the Spirit, and this grace brings three kinds of blessings: spiritual-relational-material.
3. **Mediating on the 1st commandment duty of faith that unites us to Christ in the new covenant of grace.** WLC symphonic pedagogical way of meditating: the new covenant grace of God brought to us by our mediator, the Lord Jesus Christ in the effectual calling that gives us his Spirit can write this law and its delight on our hearts, enabling us to do our moral duty and resist immoral counsel, ways and seats.

B. HOW DOES A MAN (OR WOMAN OR CHILD) GET TO THIS LIFE OF BLESSEDNESS? How do we delight in the contemplation of righteousness, in 'seeking first the kingdom and his righteousness' (Matt 6:33), "when you walk by the way", "when you lie down", [standing] "when you rise", when you sit in your house" (Deut. 6:7)? **MEDITATING ON & DELIGHTING IN THE LAW WILL DEVELOP OUR ETHICAL WISDOM TO BE CHRIST'S MEDIATE REPRESENTATIVE WHO BRINGS "JOY TO THE WORLD" ("far as the curse is found") by exemplifying, proclaiming, interceding and administrating moral law wisdom IN THE ASSEMBLY OF THE RIGHTEOUS**

1. Our moral duties are generally defined in WLC 103-149. But we need wisdom even to see how these duties apply to various unique situations. Is it ok to do XYZ? The answers are not usually yes or no, but shaped by the nuances contributed by various interdependent commandments.
2. "Already" experienced a mixture of both blessings (some prosperity from the immediate results of receiving the symphonic pedagogical perspective, knowing trusting God, living within the *lex Christi virtues*) and curses (fallen world + sinners against us), but "not yet" received our full reward or punishment.
 - i. **EXAMPLE 1:** Essentially, DUE TO OUR OWN SINS we can limit our own experience of the punishments of sin in this world and experience some measure of the blessings for obedience by moral law obedience. For example, consider the 6th commandment (you shall not kill) which includes the heart sins of anger and bitterness, holding grudges, repaying evil for evil, taking revenge against others (WLC 136). When left unchecked, these heart sins cause fights and many relational sorrows in marriages, families, churches, schools and

the workplace. When others provoke us to anger, we have choices whether to escalate or deescalate, to reply in anger, to text or email in anger. You are not a passive victim in most cases (though there are situations where abusers manipulate, dominate and control others that may require some forms of separation for self-protection). This would be an example of 'walking in the counsel of the wicked, standing in the way of sinners and sitting in the seat of scoffers.' Though we cannot control the anger, bitterness or the grudges of others, we can learn to forgive, seek peace and entrust judgment to God (duties of the 6th commandment, WLC 135). We can see the blessings of mediating on and delighting in the 6th commandment and how, by living in conformity to it, God will bring a measure of 'fruitfulness' and 'prosperity' (Ps. 1:3) to our relationships in marriages, families, churches and workplaces. When we live with and around others who delight in these 6th commandment virtues, we share the blessings of their fruitfulness and prosperity. This example would fit with what Paul teaches in Romans 12:18: "If possible, so far as it depends on you, live peaceably with all." And in marriages and families where you model these 6th commandment virtues of 'living peaceably with everyone' you likely will pass on these relational blessings to others and another form of 'fruitfulness' and 'prosperity'.

- ii. **EXAMPLE 2: Recently the coworker of the Family Counseling Center in Taiwan asked me if his counselee (father/husband) should confess the private sexual sins committed against his spouse to his 8 and 13 year old children? (the answer would be different if the father sinned in the presence of the child, such as yelling at his mother in contemptuous anger, which sins against the child by disrespecting his mother, and in that case requires confession to the child)**

1) REDEMPTIVE ENGAGEMENT BY THE SPIRITUALLY MATURE TO

- a. RESTORE THOSE WHO SIN TO MORAL DUTIES (Jas. 5:16 confess to those mature enough to view with mercy and to pray for healing; *you who are spiritual* should restore in a spirit of gentleness. Bear one another's burdens and so fulfill the law of Christ Gal. 6:1-2; Luke 19:10 'Christ came to seek and save the lost' so one major purpose of Christ's seeking out of sin information is for a saving, reconciling purpose). Parenting children requires this over and over.
- b. ONE WAY TO RESTORE IS BY CONFESSION TO THOSE DIRECTLY SINNED AGAINST, (sin is always against God, so always requires confession to him. Sin is usually also against another, and in those cases requires confession to the one sinned against). Good parenting requires children to practice this.
 - i. (WLC 145) In what circumstances are we "called to a free confession", circumstance when "hiding . . . sins" would be wrong? Proof texts citing that all sins against God and people ALWAYS call for free confession to God (Gen. 4:8-9; so, the first sin confronted by God in Eden was answered not with confession, but with hiding and excusing, Gen. 3:12-13). "Whoever conceals his transgressions will not prosper, but he who confesses and forsakes them will obtain mercy," (Prov. 28:13; see other denying sin examples in Jer. 2:35; 2 Kings 5:25).
 - ii. (WCF 15:6) As every man is bound to make private confession of his sins to God, praying for the pardon thereof; upon which, and the forsaking of them, he shall find mercy; so, he that scandalizeth his brother, or the Church of Christ, ought to be willing, by a private or public confession, and sorrow for his sin to declare his

repentance to those that are offended, who are thereupon to be reconciled to him, and in love to receive him. Our general principle is similar in Matt. 18:15, that private sins are dealt with privately: “If your brother sins against you, go and tell him his fault, between you and him alone.” We break privacy when more mature people are needed to bring redemptive reconciliation (Matt. 18:16-17).

- 2) FAILED REDEMPTIVE ENGAGEMENT BY THE SPIRITUALLY MATURE MAY REQUIRE THEM TO TESTIFY TO HARD-HEARTEDNESS: We break privacy when more mature people are needed to testify to unrepentance (Matt. 18:16-17).
- 3) PEOPLE WHO WILL NOT OR CANNOT REDEMPTIVELY ENGAGE SHOULD NOT BE CARELESSLY INCLUDED IN CONFESSION OR EXPOSING SIN (WLC 145) WHAT SITUATIONS ARE CONSIDERED AN “UNNECESSARY DISCOVERING OF INFIRMITIES”? WLC proof texts cite Proverbs 25:9-10 Argue your case with your neighbor himself, and *do not reveal another's secret*, lest he who hears you bring shame upon you, and your ill repute have no end. Another cited text is when Noah's son Ham unnecessarily told his brothers about Noah's drunken nakedness (Gen. 9:22), perhaps for proud condemnation or curious voyeurism rather than redemptive covering in his weakness.

Based on the general principles above related to loving your neighbor and duty to confess specific sins when directly sinning against someone (WCF 15:6), if kids haven't been directly sinned against and there are no direct sins that impact them, there is no immediate need to disclose. Sometimes later confession of past faults is shared as a testimony of the punishments of sin that occurred for the purpose of preventing similar errors in others. Like the case studies in Proverbs 5-7, a parent may share his or her past failures as a “simple” or “foolish” individual who has now learned wisdom through failure (WCF 17:3; 18:4).

Mediating on and delighting in the 5th C (“honor father and mother” pro-harmony, WLC 123-133) helps us consider what burdens children can or should bear:

The burden of bearing another person's sins as priest requires a level of merciful maturity to be emotional trash can and to learn to empty that trash, which children cannot yet bear.

WLC 129, *protecting them*, WLC 130, sins such as commanding them to *do what is not in their power to perform*, *carelessly exposing them to temptation*, *provoking them to anger*. . . *lessening their authority*, by . . ., *indiscreet*, . . . *behavior*.

Meditating on and delighting in the 6th & 8th Cs (“you shall not kill” pro-life virtues, WLC 135-136; “you shall not steal” pro-stewardship virtues; WLC 141-142). If the wife will not forgive and the couple cannot reconcile, this bitterness will usually spill out on children by the disrespect of the mother to their father, eventually they will need to be told vaguely/generally what happened (6th C). If parents separate or divorce, then some more general explanation is required since this directly sins against children by damaging their life provisions (home, finances 8th C).

Meditating on and delighting in the 9th C (“you shall not give false testimony” pro-truthfulness, reputation virtues, WLC 144-145)

Generally, not telling young children anything is the best. If the offense can be covered and parents can reconcile, no need to disclose. This guards the reputations of the parents from unnecessary damage, children maintain their respect and positive views of parents.

WLC 144 sorrowing for, and covering of their infirmities . . . WLC 145 “speaking the truth unseasonably, or maliciously to a wrong end, (such as mother complaining of father's unfaithfulness without a

redemptive purpose), . . . unnecessary discovering of infirmities; . . . practicing, or not avoiding ourselves, or not hindering: What we can in others, such things as procure an ill name.

iii. EXAMPLE 3: MEDITATING ON LEX CHRISTI AT WORK

It is always our duty to know and obey the moral law. Whether our sociopolitical context enables us to experience blessings like Prov. 31 virtuous woman is not guaranteed in this life. In some contexts, doing our moral duty will bring persecution.

1) symphonic commandments perspective (unified morality, all commandments seen together as inseparable perspective on righteousness) My work should be motivated to reflect the Lord *Lex Christi* righteousness in everything I do.

relating the 1st & 5th Cs, that her goal should be to please the Lord (1st C) and those who represent his righteous authority, which is a form of honoring them (5th C). We all appreciate the praise of coworkers and bosses for work well done or because we have good qualities as friends (9th C giving proper praise where praise is due), but this should be only a minor part of what motivates us to work.

Have LQ print out and memorize this *Lex Christi* perspective on work: Every commandment provides helpful motives to do our work: pleasing the Lord (1st C), using work as a form of pleasing God through Christ working in and through me by Spirit in the new covenant (2nd C, Colossians 3:22-24; Rom. 12:1-2), my work represents the Lord's name and reputation when I publicly identify myself as a Christian (3rd C), I work 6 days and rest one day (4th C), I maintain harmony at work with bosses, coworkers and those under my authority, according to my assigned duties (5th C), I work with gentleness, kindness, and mercy, and do not get angry or bitter at others, but forgive if offended (6th C), for singles (unmarried) my work honors one-man-one woman marriage, encouraging and respecting those who are married to be faithful to their spouses, and those who are single to respect boundaries of sexual purity with all coworkers (7th C), I work to steward the resources of the company that are entrusted to me, doing my job to make the company succeed as much as possible (8th C), I work with a positive attitude to others (Philippians 1:3-11; 4:8), not being suspicious, negative or critical, not speaking or listening to false witness or gossip about others (9th C), from a heart of contentment and thankfulness for all God's daily mercies to me, not coveting the money, positions, praise or jobs of others (10th C).

These commandments should be the reason for going to work, which, when these commandments are her meditation day and night (Psalm 1:2) also takes the focus off of herself.

SUMMARY OF PRACTICAL IMPLICATIONS: JOY TO THE WORLD Christmas hymn captures the practical implications of Psalm 1.

No more let sins and sorrows grow,
Nor thorns infest the ground;
He comes to make His blessings flow
Far as the curse is found,
Far as the curse is found,
Far as, far as, the curse is found.

He rules the world with truth and grace,
And makes the nations prove
The glories of His righteousness,
And wonders of His love,
And wonders of His love,
And wonders, wonders, of His love.

In summary the visible church, and all assemblies of two or more believers under that rubric (family, school, seminary, business, neighborhood, political groups), as representatives of Christ, labor to reverse the curse factors (WLC 28 punishments of sin in this world) related to enmity of man with God and man with man, which have *spiritual-relational-material* implications. The blessing of family as a mini-assembly of the Lord reverses every commandment's curse and reinforces every commandment's blessings. The Proverbs 31:10-31 virtuous woman narrative is still a valid type of example of the beauty of intertwined moral kingdom-coming combined with the Lord's environmental blessing given in interdependent *lex Christi* family and community life. We who delight in the Lord and experience the satisfaction of the desires of our *lex Christi* renewed hearts (Ps. 37:3-4) should also delight in administering the wisdom and justice of those laws to bring human flourishing in our own families, churches, workplaces, neighborhoods (Ps. 37:30).

We participate in reflecting the kingdom moral law blessings to others, in spiritual, relational, material ways. Where the brothers and sisters, those in the assembly of two or more are not bearing fruit, their leaf is withering, they are not prospering, we give help and assistance to help them restore them to bear spiritual, relational, material *lex Christi* fruit, to help them prosper in moral law obedience.

IV. FUTURE FULFILLMENTS OF PSALM 1

- A. The wicked are not so, but are like chaff that the wind drives away.⁵ Therefore the wicked will not stand in the judgment, nor sinners in the congregation of the righteous;⁶ for the LORD knows the way of the righteous, but the way of the wicked will perish.

They will be 'blown away' by the Lord Jesus Christ in the eschatological judgment, cast into eternal hell. The righteous refuse to join their numbers, perhaps limiting their power in some circumstances.

Representing God in blowing the wicked away (this way is natural to fallen mankind outside of Christ). The "wind" drives the wicked away: Likely the entire vs. 4 is a metaphor for the Lord's righteous earthly representative authorities (5th C related, especially his king, Psalm 2) functioning like wind that blows the wicked away in earthly judgment removing them from the congregation of the righteous. The prophetic parallel is found in Jeremiah 17:5-8, the man is cursed who trusts in man, not in the Lord, and is like the tumbleweed in the desert. But the man who trusts in the Lord is like the tree planted by the stream lasting and bearing fruit "freedom from the crippling damage of drought" (noted by Kidner, *Psalms* 48-49)

From the specifics of the punishments of sin *in this life*, we can trace the justice of hell in the second eternal death (Rev. 20:14). Hell will be the place of *lex Christi* antithesis, the multiplication of the sorrows and punishments of *spiritual-relational-material* unrighteousness forever on wicked souls rejoined to physical bodies. Scripture's vision of hell's torments reveal it as the ultimate form of giving men up to their lusts (Rom. 1:24, 26, 28). Hell does not transform the wicked, but leaves them to dwell in pure unrighteousness, unmitigated by what was experienced on earth with

common grace and the presence of the elect. Hell is giving men what they have desired (Rev. 21:8), combined with the immediate torment of the justice due that unrighteousness, including its “natural” consequences: hatred for God, his worship, name and Sabbath rest, hatred for men, complete anti-harmony, anti-life, anti-marriage, anti-stewardship, anti-truthfulness, anti-contentment. In terms of Proverbs 1:31, the wicked will “eat the fruit of their way, and have their fill of their own devices.” Using a *lex Christi* hermeneutic on Luke 16:24-31, readers can observe that hell is a place of intense, but completely unsatisfied desires (antithesis of 10th C) of thirst and fire and being eaten by worms (antithesis of 6th C; Isa. 66:24) and for protection of earthly family (antithesis of 5th & 7th Cs) while God ignores begging pleas for help or salvation (antithesis 1st C; Prov. 1:24-32). The story also includes the application of reversed justice, that the rich man’s ignoring and rejecting the poor man’s need of mercy in this world is punished by rejecting his pleas for mercy in hell (antithesis 1st C). Another form of torment comes from seeing the satisfied desires of the godly from “far off” (antithesis of 10th C, Luke 16:23). Thus, it is likely that hell will be a place of intense, but unsatisfied, desires related to all the commandments. It will be a place for the complete removal of *all* common grace benefits that grant men so many earthly satisfactions, inward-spiritual, and outward-relational-material (Acts 14:17). The eternal curse gives men what they wanted, a *spiritual-relational-material* place where all the sorrows of *lex Christi* antithesis abound forever.

B. Hope for Perfection of *Lex Christi* Blessings

How much more then, through these metaphors of food and clothing, should enjoy the physical-spiritual symbols of mercy in Christ, the bread of life, in the cup of blessing and in the robe of righteousness, and honor and give thanks to him for effectual call to salvation and union with Christ by the sealing of the Spirit.²⁶ With this ultimate form of blessing in spiritual communion with the Father through union with Christ by the Spirit, all other relational-material blessings are but glimpses of the future blessed kingdom where the *lex Christi* spiritual-relational-material related curses are completely removed. Instead, *lex Christi*’s spiritual-relational-material blessings will be fully enjoyed.²⁷

We should have more clarity in proclaiming Westminster’s implications of our New Testament blessings. Old Testament physical-material Canaan doesn’t simply become ethereal New Testament spiritual blessings,²⁸ but foreshadow and now give foretastes of physical, fleshly, moral order joys of the new Edenic-Jerusalem coming into our groaning creation experiences now. These do point to the relational-material blessings promised in the new heavens and new earth. But the NT application of Canaan’s promised land also now gives us a foretaste of joy from spiritual-relational-material *lex Christi* blessings reflected in this earthly coming of Christ’s kingdom (Rom. 1:20-21). We have this irreducible complexity of spiritual-relational-material joy when others enter and remain in that kingdom, even as the angels in heaven rejoice (Luke 15:10). Those who enter this kingdom with us are our spiritual-relational brothers and sisters, mothers and fathers, husbands and wives and sons and daughters in shared material life in the lived spaces of our assemblies, the creation and the diaspora. God should not have designed a material world or our physical bodies, or told us to be fruitful and multiply and rule over the

²⁶ Rom. 8:31-34; Eph. 1:3-14; John 6:35; 1 Cor. 10:16

²⁷ See Yates PhD thesis, 5.4

²⁸ A possible imbalance of interpreting Ephesians 1:3 out of *lex Christi* context, “Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places”

earth, if the answer to our problems was *only* to find our joy, blessedness or happiness in him. In that case, like the angels, we should only need an ethereal realm of spiritual existence. Adam needed a helper, since it was not possible to administrate the *lex Christi* kingdom alone. We must guard against applications of how we ‘glorify and enjoy God forever’ with imbalanced statements like this: “Find all our happiness in Jesus; nothing else matters.” To know that everything matters in this physical world prevents us all from thinking our earth-bound, material, embodied, relationally enmeshed existence is headed for an escape by finding union with an ethereal happiness in God himself. All good practical theology is founded on the irreducible complexity of representative *persons* blessing *by* derivative *attributes*, with the central focus on the spiritual-relational-material coming of the *lex Christi* kingdom.²⁹

Since Jesus is God-clothed in human flesh, the heavenly mercy seat of his literal blood-bought atonement must be physical. His throne at God’s right hand must be physical-material. His cultural mandate as second Adam and head of an earth-stewarding people must together rule over a renewed earth and heavens. His preparation of a geo-spatial New Jerusalem as a garden-city-temple must take place in a real, space-time location and be brought down from heaven onto this flame-cleansed earth.³⁰ Elect believers’ perfected spirits are raised to reign with Christ as kings in the millennial age, although they are not yet joined to their resurrection bodies.³¹ They intercede as priests before the throne of God.³² The memory of their life-testimonies while among the living function as part of the prophetic cloud of witnesses for the living.³³ The Lord will “make all things new” (Rev. 21:5). All anti-*lex Christi* representatives and the corresponding spiritual-relational-material curses will be removed.³⁴ We shall be raised, *lex Christi* perfected bodied-souls, to experience *lex Christi* perfected spiritual-relational-material blessings forever: We shall “see his face” “worship him” and “have his name on [our] foreheads.”³⁵ We shall enter his work-rest in the creation rhythms of days, weeks, seasons and years, joined our brother-sister family as harmonious co-rulers, married to Christ and the healed enmity between nations, living in the abundant

²⁹ Isa. 42:1-21; Matt. 6:33; 12:15-21

³⁰ Rev. 21:2; John 14:3; 2 Pet. 3:10. Romans 8:19-22 indicates that, similar to the renewal and setting free of the redeemed body of God’s sons in the resurrection, the creation is waiting with eager expectation, though now groaning under the curses upon it, waiting for the redemption of God sons when the creation itself will be “set free from its bondage to corruption and obtain the freedom of the glory of the children of God.” Christ’s reconciliation includes ‘all things on earth or in heaven’ (Col. 1:20). “The kingdom of the world has become the kingdom of our Lord and of his Messiah and he will reign forever and ever,” (Rev. 11:15). The glory of the nations will be brought into the holy city (Rev. 21:24-26; Isa 60). If the creation was to be annihilated, totally done away with and replaced, why would it be waiting and suddenly experience freedom at the same time when the sons of God are redeemed from their corruption? How could he become king over the kingdoms of this world? How would any glory of the nations be left to bring into the holy city? So we wonder if the ‘first heaven and earth passing away, with the removal of the sea’ (Rev. 21:1) may mean that the its current condition of being cursed and filled with reprobate sinners changes, a judgment “destroying the destroyers of the earth” (Rev. 11:18). However, some kind of cataclysmic, exposing burning and melting/dissolving happens: stars fall to the earth and the earth’s atmosphere vanishes like a rolled up scroll, and the mountains melt and run like wax or water to split the valleys to expose the earth and man’s works done on the earth (Micah 1:3-4; 2 Pet. 3:7, 10; Rev. 6:12-14; Isa. 26:21 disclosing the blood that was shed and exposing the concealed dead people). But, in the pattern of the flood, the heavens and the earth will be reformed and refined through the fire instead of through the water (2 Pet. 3:5-6; 1 Pet. 1:7) and create a renewed home of righteousness (2 Pet. 3:13). For further research on this topic or the continuing existence of the current world, see “I Am Making Everything New” chapter 9, *Creation Care: A Biblical Theology of the Natural World*, Douglas and Jonathan Moo (Zondervan 2018).

³¹ Rev. 20:4-6. From the amillennial perspective, this age is defined as starting when Christ ascended into heaven to send the Spirit until the time he returns again.

³² Rev. 8:1-3; 6:9-11

³³ Heb. 12:1; 13:7

³⁴ WLC 28; Rev. 20:10, 14-15; 21:4, 8; 22:3; Rom. 8:19-23

³⁵ Rev. 22:3-4; 1st C; 2nd C, 3rd C respectively

food-water, life sustaining new heavens and new earth with a physical home, stewardship over lands and cities with control over the wealth of the nations, honored with the testimony of our reputations, satisfied with all we need.³⁶ We also can read the Q&A blessing above as our new heaven-new earth promise. We are “waiting for our blessed hope” (Tit. 2:13)!

³⁶ 4th C, Rev. 14:13; 6:11; Christ fulfills the patterns of time as Jerusalem's light (eternal daylight, Isa. 60:19-20; Rev. 21:23-25; 22:5). However, the time-patterns and signs of stars, sun, moon, seasons, day and night, weekly rhythms, Sabbaths, and years will remain the same: months are still marked by new fruit, the heavenly bodies will remain forever fixed. (Rev. 22:2, 5; 21:23-24; Gen. 1:14-18; Ps. 89:35-37; 104:19; Isa. 60-11; Jer. 31:35-36). “From new moon to new moon, and from Sabbath to Sabbath, all flesh shall come to worship before me, declares the LORD,” (Isa 66:23). 5th C & 7th C, Rev. 21:2; 22:2, 5; Matt. 22:30; 12:50; the number of God's children is completed and the will be earth filled Matthew 22:30; Rev. 21:2, 9-27; 14:1-5; 19:7-9; Genesis 1:28; 15:5; 22:17; 32:12; 6th C & 8th C Rev. 21:1-3, 6, 24, 26; 22:2; Matt. 19:29; Luke 19:16-19. 9th C The saints' reputation of faith and good works are written in the Lamb's book of life and truthful testimony about them is given for proof of their salvation, Rev. 3:5; 20:15. 10th C Rev. 21:6, 22-23, 24, 26