

The Christ Tree

Psalm 1-2

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TRANSCRIPT:

If you have your Bibles, please open them to Psalm 1. We'll actually be reading both Psalm 1 and 2 and looking at both Psalms together today. So let's read them now.

Psalm 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. But his delight is in the law of the Lord, and on His law he meditates day and night. 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. The wicked are not so, but are like chaff that the wind drives away. Therefore the wicked will not stand in the judgment, nor sinners in the congregation of the righteous. For the Lord knows the way of the righteous, but the way of the wicked will perish.

Why do the nations rage and the peoples plot in vain? The kings of the earth set themselves, and the rulers take counsel together, against the Lord and against His anointed, saying, "Let us burst their bonds apart and cast away their cords from us." He who sits in the heavens laughs; the Lord holds them in derision. And He will speak to them in His wrath, and terrify them in His fury, saying, "As for me, I have set my king on Zion, my holy hill." I will tell of the decree: The Lord said to me, "You are my Son; today I have begotten you. Ask of me, and I will make the nations your heritage, and the ends of the earth your possession. You shall break them with a rod of iron and dash them in pieces like a potter's vessel."

Now therefore, O kings, be wise; be warned, O rulers of the earth. Serve the Lord with fear, and rejoice with trembling. Kiss the Son, lest He be angry, and you perish in the way, for His wrath is quickly kindled. Blessed are all who take refuge in Him.

Let's pray. Father, it is glorious that You would speak to us. We thank You for giving us Your word. And we pray, Lord, as we look at this word, that You would speak to our hearts even today. Lord, our hearts are so

hard that we can easily look at Your word and not see You. But we pray, Lord, that by Your Spirit, You would be among us, that we might see You in Your word today. Help us, we pray, in Jesus' name, amen.

In Psalm 1 and 2, taken together, we find the story of the whole Bible in just 18 verses. The reason that I think you can take these two Psalms together—you can't normally do that. The Psalms aren't like a normal book. They are often standalone individual Psalms, but they are organized, and so sometimes you see connections. And in this case, I think that they are connected. The reason is several-fold. For a start, look at how Psalm 1 begins and how Psalm 2 ends: "Blessed is the man... blessed are all who take refuge in Him." That's a bit of a literary key.

Secondly, there's a clear connection in these two Psalms regarding the destruction of the wicked. Both Psalms deal explicitly with the final end of those who reject God. Psalm 1 speaks of the wicked being driven away and not standing in God's judgment. Psalm 2, verses 5, 9, and 12, speaks of God's King being full of wrath towards His enemies, dashing them in pieces and destroying them in their way.

But lastly, and I think this is vital to how we read Psalm 1 and is often missed when we read Psalm 1, both Psalms are about one man. Did you notice that? Look at Psalm 1, verse 1: "Blessed is the man," singular. It's about one man, as is Psalm 2: "As for me, I have set my King on Zion, my holy hill." I'm a man. And so I want to work through these two Psalms together with you, and I want to show you the story of the whole Bible in Psalm 1 and 2.

Psalm 1 opens by telling us about a blessed man. This man is defined by two characteristics. Firstly, he doesn't listen to wicked, sinful scoffers. He doesn't follow them into the way of evil. Instead, the second characteristic of the blessed man: he delights in the law of the Lord and meditates on it day and night.

And whenever you see that word "law" there in the Old Testament, you have to think, what does that mean? It could mean three different things. It could mean the Ten Commandments; that's the law of God. It could mean the Torah; that's actually the Hebrew word that's used. The Torah is what the law is translated as there. And that's the first five books of the Bible. Or it could mean all of God's revelation, all of God's words that He's spoken to people.

Either way, whenever we think of God's word, whether it's commandments, rules, or His Torah, the first five books of the Bible, or all of His revelation, what is it telling us? What is it about? What would a faithful Israelite or

a faithful blessed man who meditates on God's law, what would he see? Is he reading a rule book with some sort of abstract laws in it? Not at all.

We have the New Testament, so we can read it through the light of Jesus, but I'll show you that even the Old Testament, you see this. But if you just consider what Christ says about the law, we see what a blessed man who meditates on it would see. John 5:46, Jesus says, "If you believed Moses, you would believe me, for he wrote of me." The Torah, what Moses wrote, tells you about Jesus. He says a similar thing on the road to Emmaus in Luke 24, where he speaks about the law, the prophets, and the Psalms—that's the three categories of the entire Old Testament—and he says these all speak of me.

And when you combine that truth that the entire scripture speaks to us about God's man, Jesus Christ, and you combine that with what Jesus says in John 14:9, where he says to Philip, "If you have seen me, you've seen the Father," then you discover some very basic and central truths to how we should read the Bible, which is this: God's written revelation speaks to us about Christ. Christ shows us the Father. So all of scripture is an expression of the character of God displayed to us in the person and work of Jesus Christ.

God is known in two ways, broadly speaking, through the Bible. He's known through His works, and that's what the scriptures tell us of. They tell us of His work of creation, they tell us of His work of redemption, they tell us of His works of judgment. You'll see all of those just in the book of Genesis, but you see them all through the scriptures.

But we also see the character of God in the law of God, in the things that He teaches His people to do. And both of those are encapsulated in the person of Jesus. He is a historical work of God; He is God's work of creation and redemption displayed in a person, and He is the law embodied. He is the way that a human should live displayed for us.

This means that the blessed man who's meditating on God's law, if an Israelite tried to obey this and to think about God's law all the time, he would see God. And we know that because when you go to Psalm 119, which is all about the glory of the law of God, you see the psalmist connecting these two things. Psalm 119, verse 7, he says, "I will praise you with an upright heart when I learn your righteous rules." See that connection? I'm meditating on your rules, and that leads me to praising you. He says it again in verse 62, "At midnight I rise to praise you." Why? "Because of your righteous rules."

So when we read the law in the Old Testament correctly, what do we see? We see God Himself; we see the author of the rules, and we're amazed at

Him. And we rise with the psalmist and praise Him. This is my point: The blessed man in Psalm 1 loves God's instructions, God's promises, God's redemptive work. He meditates on these things. Why? Because he delights in God Himself, and he sees God in these things.

And so, what is this blessed man like then? Well, verse 3 tells us he's like a tree planted by streams of water that bears its fruit in its season. His leaf will not wither, and all that he does will prosper. This is a glorious, very earthy image of stability, vibrancy, life, fruitfulness, flourishing, productivity, strength, and longevity, right?

The image of a vibrant tree like this is not unique in the scriptures. What does it make you think of? Think of trees in the Bible. What do you see? Where do you see them? Well, we should immediately think of the Garden of Eden, the tree of life. We meet this tree in Genesis 2:9-10, where the Lord records, "Out of the ground the Lord God made to spring up every tree that is pleasant to the sight and good for food. The tree of life was in the midst of the garden, and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil." And then we often stop there, but if you read the next verse, it paints a very interesting picture. Can you see it there? The tree of life in the middle of the garden. "A river flowed out of Eden to water the garden, and there it divided and became four rivers." A tree of life is planted next to a river. Does that remind you of someone?

You might say, well, that's just one connection, Tom, but yes, the Bible tells us more about the tree of life. If you go over to Revelation—I'll read it for you; you don't have to jump there—Revelation 22:1-2, the tree of life turns up again, and now listen to this: "Then the angel showed me the river of the water of life, bright as crystal, flowing from the throne of God and of the Lamb through the middle of the street of the city. So we've got a river also, and on either side of the river, the tree of life with its twelve kinds of fruit, yielding its fruit each month. The leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations." Well, now we've got a bigger picture of the tree of life, don't we? It's a fruitful tree, bearing its fruit every season. It's a tree that has leaves on it that are plentiful and healing. It's planted next to this river of life, streams of water.

The picture in Psalm 1 of the blessed man, a man who delights in God and His commandments, is combined with this image of the tree of life. The blessed man is a tree of life. Now that should make us think of Adam because Adam was planted in the garden, and he really was. He's actually meant to be a little tree. Back in Genesis 1:11, God commands the earth to bring forth plants yielding seed and fruit trees bearing fruit which is in their seed. And then in Genesis 2:7, we find that God forms man in a very similar way. He pulls man up out of the dirt, forming him from the dust of

the ground. He sprouts from the ground just like the trees did. And God commands the man, "Be fruitful and multiply." And you don't have to read far in the Bible to find out how he's going to multiply; he's going to multiply through his seed. These are all tree language.

It's almost like—and this is my argument; it is like this—the tree of life is in the garden. Adam's going to eat this tree of life and become a little walking tree of life and make more trees of life after him. Fruitful trees, that's what he's commanded to be. Be fruitful. Trees that self-replicate. Be fruitful and multiply through your seed. And so what was he meant to do? Well, he was meant to do what this Psalm 1 blessed man is doing. He was meant to delight in the law of God because he delights in God Himself. His fruit that he was to bear was going to be obedience. It was going to be acts of service to God. It was going to be children who obey God and who are faithful to God.

And the stream that this tree is planted by, I want to just think about that for a moment as well as we consider the tree. What is this stream? What is the river in Eden that then divides out into the world? Well, in Revelation, we're told that the river of life flows from the throne, flows out of the Father and the Son. In John 7, Jesus makes this very explicit. You should be getting an imagery already of what this might be. But in John 7, Jesus makes it very clear. He says, "If anyone thirsts, let him come to me, and I will make rivers of living water flow from them." He will fill them up, and then rivers will flow from them. And he says this in verse 39 of John 7, "Now he said this about the Spirit." See what this river is? See what the river in Eden was? The river that was to flow from the tree of life and spread out into the whole world. The river in Psalm 1 that's feeding this blessed tree. The river in Revelation that's going out, proceeding from the Father and the Son. The river that Jesus pours into His people that then overflows out of them. It's the Spirit, the Holy Spirit.

This imagery is used all through the Bible. I won't go to the other places, but if you're interested, you can ask me. But the blessed man, the man that Adam was meant to be, was not only meant to feed on the tree of life. Not only was he meant to delight in God, but he was to be fed by the Spirit of God. And then he was to become a channel for the Spirit to flow out into the world. Sometimes you might think of when a tree is planted by a stream, it's like the stream goes past the tree. But Revelation says no, that's not the picture you should have. Imagine the tree planted over the river. The river then flows into the tree and out of the tree. That's the image of the blessed man. Adam was meant to be nourished by the Spirit, and the Spirit was meant to flow out of him into the world, just as the rivers flowed out of Eden.

So is Adam this blessed man? Well, no. You know what happened to Adam,

I hope. Adam didn't delight in the law of the Lord. Adam didn't decline the counsel of the wicked. No, in the garden, he listened to the wicked one. And he obeyed him. And so God cursed Adam and said to him, "By the sweat of your face you shall eat bread till you return to the ground, for out of it you were taken; for dust you are, and to dust you shall return." And then a few verses later, we read, "God drove out the man. And at the east of the garden of Eden, He placed the cherubim and a flaming sword that turned every way to guard the way to the tree of life."

Well, this picture takes us right back to Psalm 1, verse 4. What are the wicked like? The wicked are like the chaff that the wind drives away. This is precisely what happened to Adam and Eve. The word "wind" in Hebrew is the same word as "spirit." And so when you see an active wind or an active spirit driving out the wicked and turning him into dusty chaff, you can think of Adam being driven out, away from the tree of life, condemned to turn to dust.

Light, dry, useless, flimsy, passing away dust. The very opposite of a fruitful tree. Now before we keep moving into Psalm 2, we must ask the question: where are you in Psalm 1? We've seen how the imagery of Psalm 1 connects very strongly to tell us where Adam and Eve are. They're in verse 4, right? They're driven away from the tree of life to be turned into dust. Where are you? Where am I? Well, we're right where our father Adam is. By nature, every one of us is born with the same sinful nature that Adam has or had. That sinful nature means that we hate God and His law. That's how we're born. We're not born denying the counsel of the wicked. We're very happy to listen to them. We're not born loving God as we see Him in His law. We hate it. We reject His authority. And as a result, we die.

Have you ever wondered why people die? It's fascinating the way that every human being speaks about death. We all know that this is not natural. We're not meant to die. And we know it. And you know that we know it because how do we speak about death? Well, firstly, we speak about it as if it's a tragedy. But if death was a normal part of life, we wouldn't think it's a tragedy. We don't think a leaf that falls on the ground and rots and turns into soil is a tragedy. We think it's normal. But we think that when people die and turn into dirt, that it's a tragedy. Why? It's because we're not meant to die.

But we also know that this is true because how do we speak about someone who's died? Think of your non-Christian friend, right? How do they speak about their father who passed away? "He's in a better place." "He's going to live on in our hearts." Why do we speak about the dead as if they're still around? It's because we know death's not normal, and people are not meant to die. It's because, as the Bible tells us, God has placed eternity

into our hearts. And really, it's because of what we've just been looking at. It's because Adam was meant to become a tree of life. And his children were meant to be trees of life after him. And being driven out by the wind, by the Spirit of God, to turn into dust is something that was not the original intention of the created order.

Or to put it differently, even though we all know that we turn to dust like Psalm 1, verse 4, when we read this Psalm, where does your heart long to be? Do you read it and go, "Yes, I agree. I'm going to turn to dust"? No, you read it and you say, "I want to be a tree by the river. I want to be a strong oak planted by streams of living water. I want to bear fruit. I want to be prosperous." We all gravitate to Psalm 1, verse 3. Why? If we all know we're going to die, it's because we know we're meant to be feeding off the tree of life, becoming little trees of life.

This is your situation if you are not a Christian. If you're here today and you're not trusting in Christ, if He's not your Lord and you're not your Savior, you are in Psalm 1, verse 4. You have been driven by God away from the tree of life. Your source of life is far from you, and you are condemned to turn to dust and waste away. Nothing that you do will have any eternal value whatsoever. This is why the Psalmist points us in verse 5 and 6 to the final judgment. "Therefore the wicked will not stand in the judgment, nor sinners in the congregation of the righteous. For the Lord knows the way of the righteous, but the way of the wicked will perish." You see, in the light of mortality, in the light of the fact that we are all going to die, we should see that there is an eternal judgment. And if we are not in Psalm 1, verse 3, then we are falling away with the wicked.

But there is a hope, isn't there? Did you pick up in verse 5? They won't stand in the congregation of the righteous. Before I said there is only one blessed man in verse 1 to 3, but now we have a congregation of blessed men. Where did they come from? Well, we'll get to that. For now, though, we must delve further into our terrible situation because Psalm 2 opens with these words: "Why do the nations rage and the peoples plot in vain? The kings of the earth set themselves, and the rulers take counsel together against the Lord and against His anointed, saying, 'Let us burst their bonds apart and cast away their cords from us.'" The first thing to note about these opening verses is that they are highly political. Kings, rulers, nations, peoples—here we have fully developed human civilization with hierarchy, with rulers, with leaders, and groups of people gathered together as nations.

What is civilization doing? Perhaps humanity only failed because Adam was by himself. Maybe we need more people working together, and then we can overcome one another's weaknesses. But that's not what we find. Psalm 2 is really a picture of the history of the world. When we read his-

tory, when we read Psalm 2, we find rulers and nations. They're not just listening to the counsel of the wicked; they are taking counsel together to rage and to plot against the Lord and against His anointed king. This is violent and active rebellion, high-handed disobedience. This is not a mistake that they're making. The kings of the world want to burst the bonds of the Lord and cast away His cords. And this language in the English, it feels like you're talking about prison. It's not prison language; it's farming language.

When you read "bonds" and "cords," don't think handcuffs; think harness. Bridle. Think a yoke being put on a beast of burden to pull a plow in a field. The horse that has the yoke on it has an owner, and the horse's role in life is to work for that owner. The kings of the earth have been hitched up to their nations by God. But they do not want to do the work of their owner. And so they kick and they buck, and they reach around and they chew the bit and the bridle. They rub up against the wall to try and dislodge the bonds that tie them to the plow. This is what human rulers do.

And once again, we're taken back to the Garden of Eden. Not only was Adam made to feed on the tree of life and become a self-propagating tree of life himself, he was also meant to be a king. Genesis 1:28 says that God said to the man, "have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over every living thing that moves on the earth." Have dominion. That's a kingly activity. Adam was made in the image of God to be God's vice-regent here on earth. He was under God. God had hitched him up to the entire world and said, "Go plow. Have dominion as my king."

And Adam kicked and bucked and said, "I don't want to rule your way, God. I want to rule my way." In fact, when you read in the Garden of Eden about the tree of the knowledge of good and evil—that's the tree that Adam ate from and how he fell into sin—originally, God said, "Don't eat of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil." And he went and ate of it anyway. Well, we often think, "Ah, eating of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, that's like if you eat of it, you find out what evil is." But that's not the way that the knowledge of good and evil is presented in the scriptures.

In 1 Kings 3:9, when God asks King Solomon, who's just been made king, "What do you want me to do for you?" Imagine that. God approaches King Solomon and says, "I'll give you anything. You tell me what you want; I'll give it to you." And Solomon asks for this: "Give your servant an understanding mind to govern your people, that I may discern between good and evil." Literally, "Give me the knowledge of good and evil so that I can govern your people. For who is able to govern this your great people?" And I think that tells us that the knowledge of good and evil is not intrinsically bad. It's actually all about wisdom for ruling. It's about governance, leadership.

The test for Adam in the Garden of Eden was not whether or not he would see that wisdom to rule well is some—well, sorry, the test was actually to see whether or not he saw that the wisdom to rule well is a gift that God gives. It's not something that we take out and grab for ourselves. That was the test. The desire for good and evil, for the knowledge of good and evil, was a good thing. The test was, "Will you see that you only get that God's way? That you only get that through reliance upon God?" But he didn't submit to God's yoke and to God's will. But he didn't submit to God's yoke and to God's counsel. Instead, he reached out, he grasped greedily, he disobeyed, and he unhitched his harness so he could rule his own way.

Now, this psalm speaks to us certainly of the rulers of the world. And don't we see the truth of this psalm playing out before our very eyes? Can't you read the history books and see the rulers and kings of the earth raging against God, seeking to throw off his yoke of righteous rule, and instead conspiring to rule their own way? Are rulers even in this country legalize abortion? They make their stand against God so obvious when they do things like vote down the Baby's Born Alive bill that they did recently. It's like you can hide behind the idea that, "Oh, we believe it's a fetus in the womb." But when you're voting actively to let babies who are born alive die, we see your rebellion. It's very clear. They legislate in order to make themselves the arbitrators of truth. Rulers get rich off their own schemes while their people suffer. They lie and they cheat and they backstab. We see it all the time in the news.

But when we understand that Adam was made by God to be the first king, and we are all children of Adam, then we should also realize that we are all kings and queens, to different degrees. Each of us has been given dominion over a small kingdom. If you're a father, God has made you the king of your family. If you're a mother, God's made you the queen of your family. If you're single, God's made you the king or queen of your particular area—your room, your home, your job, your bank account, your phone, your diet. He's given you dominion over areas of life. And the question is, what sort of king or queen are you? We can see it in our rulers, bucking and kicking to rid themselves of God's yoke of righteous rule. What are you doing? What am I doing? Are we any better? How do we use those areas of dominion that God's given us? Do we use it to produce righteousness that glorifies God? Or do we use them to seek our own purposes?

Well, when we stop and think about it, we see that those kings of Psalm 2 are just like us. We are them. We plot and we rage and we scheme and we lie in our beds thinking about how can I get everyone at work to do what I want them to do? And how can I make sure my wife does what I want her to do? We plot around how we can use our phones for our own pleasure,

whatever it might be. And things will not go well for us. God is unfazed by human rebellion. Look at verse 4-9: "He who sits in the heavens laughs. He laughs in the face of the entire human race, bucking and kicking against his rule. He laughs. He holds them in derision. He speaks to them in his wrath, and he terrifies them in his fury, saying, 'As for me, I have set my king on Zion, my holy hill.'" And the king responds and enters into this. The king that God has set on his holy hill, and he says, "I'm going to tell you of the decree. I'm going to tell you what God said to me. He said, 'You are my Son; today I have begotten you. Ask of me, and I will make the nations your heritage. You kings of the earth, you think you're going to establish your own rule? Oh no. God's going to give His king rule over all the nations. Over the ends of the earth, He will give them his possession. He will give him power to do this. You shall break them with a rod of iron and dash them in pieces like a potter's vessel.'"

We may have our plans to loose the harness of God on our life. You may want to rule your life your way. But in the light of Adam's failure, God has planned to place His king over all things. And God's king will not just be a king over one nation, but he, like Adam, will be a king over the entire world. He'll be a king of kings, and nothing will stand in his way. No plots will threaten his rule. No schemes will remove him from his throne. He will reign with absolute power and absolute certainty, and his enemies will fall like pottery falls to an iron rod. We read about it in Revelation, as Steve read to us. Wasn't that a terrifying passage? "Come, feast, birds, upon the flesh of my enemies." That's what King Jesus says to those who stand in rebellion against Him. Jesus is this king, and He has been placed on God's holy hill.

When the psalmist wrote this, they were still looking forward to the time when God would place a king on the throne and be over all nations. But we know now that Jesus has died and risen again, and ascended into glory, and before He ascended, He said to His people, "All authority has been given to me in heaven and on earth." He is already the king over all. He's already been given the rod of iron to rule with. And so the message of the gospel in Psalm 2 is presented to us in verse 10-12: "Now therefore, O kings, be wise. Put your own name there. Now therefore, Tom, be wise. Be warned, Tom. Serve the Lord with fear, and rejoice with trembling. Kiss the Son, lest He be angry, and you perish in the way, for His wrath is quickly kindled. Blessed are all who take refuge in Him."

When you see that you and I are the wicked man, the wicked people in Psalm 1:4, doomed to death, where we return to the dust, barred from the tree of life; when you see that you and I are the scheming kings in Psalm 2:1-3, refusing to submit to the yoke of the Lord in our little kingdom; and when you see that God is completely unfazed by our rebellion, there's only

one possible conclusion: Beg for mercy. Beg for mercy. What do you do if you're an army in the face of an overwhelming force coming against you? You surrender. That's the only logical, sensible thing to do. You want to save your life? You surrender. You don't keep fighting in the face of absolute power.

Submit to the anointed of the Lord. But understand this: you are not in a position to bargain. You don't get to set the terms. The message of the Bible is that we are rebellious traitors under the just wrath of God, and our end is already determined, but He is currently accepting surrenders. And the terms of the surrender are this: Traitors must come with no gifts in their hands to the rightful king. They must acknowledge their guilt and the fact that they deserve death and eternal judgment, but they must offer no payment. They must be willing to renounce everything. God's anointed king will take the punishment that's due for them and will offer life and reinstatement as a king under His rule, and many more blessings besides. That should just stagger us. What defeating king would offer those terms? What conquering king would offer those terms to a rebellious people? "Come, I'll pay everything. Come and receive. All I ask is that you leave your rebellion behind. That's it. Just say, 'I don't want to rebel anymore,' and come to me and submit. And I'll forgive. I'll not only forgive that; I'll forgive every time you keep rebelling against me after you've done that. I'll pay everything. And I'll not just make you servants in my kingdom; I'll make you sons in my kingdom. I'll not just say, 'Hey, you were bad rulers then; I'm going to make you slaves in this kingdom.' I'm going to make you a king in my kingdom, a kingdom of priests. I'm going to give you rule back over your home, rule back over your life."

Rejoice with trembling. How could you not rejoice with terms like that? And the reason that God's anointed king can forgive these rebellious kings and bring them back into his service is because God's anointed king is the tree of life. John 15, Jesus tells his disciples, "I am the true vine." And I think the imagery of vine and tree in the scriptures are connected. And he goes on to speak about many things that are similar to Psalm 1. In verse 2 of John 15, he says that branches who are grafted into Jesus by faith will be fruitful branches. They will bear fruit just like the blessed tree in Psalm 1. In verse 10 of John 15, Jesus says that there's a connection between abiding in him and keeping his commandments. Again, this idea of meditating in the law and delighting in God as he's revealed in his word. In verse 7 and 16 of John 15, this is really staggering: Those who are abiding in Jesus will find that whatever they ask the Father will be done for them. Or to phrase it a different way, whatever they do will prosper.

Jesus is the tree of life that we were barred from when Adam and Eve were driven from the Garden of Eden. And he's become a living tree. In-

stead of us having to fight our way back into Eden, which is guarded by a cherubim with a flaming sword, instead, the tree of life came down to us. He was the perfect blessed man. And he identified with us in our cursed and sinful state. And yet he continued to bear fruit. Even when the Spirit drove him into the wilderness—connected imagery again—he bore fruit in the wilderness. He was a tree planted by streams of water. Even when everything around him looked like God had rejected him, as he was out in the wilderness tempted by the devil, no food, every external sign of God's blessing taken away, he was fed by streams of living water because he was someone who was given the Spirit without measure. He was a blessed man who delighted in God himself. And so he bore fruit even in the wilderness, fruit of obedience in that place.

And when he went to the cross, he was going to another place of curse and abandonment, where he was not only placed under the wrath of God but, as Peter says in Acts 4, he was also living out a display of Psalm 2. Peter in Acts 4 says, "And then he connects it to the crucifixion and he says, 'Jesus, whom you anointed, both Herod and Pontius Pilate, along with the Gentiles and the peoples of Israel.' You want to see the nations raging against the Lord and against his anointed? Look at the cross." But even on that cross, he underwent the suffering of the wrath of God and the raging and rebellion of all the kings of the earth. And he turned it into a tree of life. As his body was pressed, the fruit of his suffering sprung from his side as the blood that cleanses us from our sin. What's the fruit of a vine? It's wine. And the wine of Jesus Christ poured from his side on the tree. Here is the fruit of the blessed Christ tree: a body broken, crushed into life-giving bread, and blood poured from his side, grapes crushed by the wrath of God and the rebellion of the human race turned into life-giving wine.

More than that, he arose from the grave, ascended to heaven, before sending into the world from his throne and from the throne of the Father, so that all who come to Christ by faith will find in him both a tree of life and a life-giving stream. Do you thirst? Do you read Psalm 1 and long to be the prosperous tree? Do you see that you are rebellious dust before a conquering king? Come to him today and find life, nourishment, refuge, safety, security, success. Be wise, O kings.

If you are grafted into the Christ tree by faith, then all that you do will prosper. And I want to close by considering very briefly this question: In what sense can it be said that all he does will prosper? All that a Christian does will prosper only because he serves the Lord with fear and rejoices with trembling. I know that branches joined to Jesus bear fruit because they kiss the Son. They do not try to buck his bridle. They submit to his rule in their life. They seek to see themselves become little Christ trees, like

Adam was supposed to be a walking tree of life. That's why Jesus could say in John 15:7, "If you abide in me and my words abide in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you." And again in verse 16, "You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you that you should bear fruit and that your fruit should abide, so that whatever you ask the Father in my name, he may give it to you."

And what is that fruit that the Christian will bear? Well, they will bear the fruit of righteous and wise rule in their life and in the kingdoms that God has given them. They will bear children, spiritual children, as they evangelize the lost, as they train their own children, and as they disciple the saints. They will bear the fruit of obedience, the fruit of the Spirit. These are the fruits that are on display in the life of a believer, but they will only bear fruit because they abide in Christ. They abide in Christ by the Spirit and by the Word. They delight in God's Word because they see God in it. They see His character. They see His anointed King, Jesus Christ. They see the works of the Father and the promises He's made. And through this, the Spirit nourishes them through His life-giving and healing work. Oh, that the Lord would make us that. Let's pray.

Heavenly Father, what a tremendous gospel You have given to us. We pray that we would rejoice in the glory of Your grace as displayed to us in Jesus Christ. Lord, make us trees of life that bear fruit in our season. Sustain us through Jesus and through the work of His Spirit. Lord, may we come and feast on the tree of life and so become like Him. We pray this in Christ's name, Amen.