

Choices Change Lives Psalm 1 (7/20/08 AM)

I read a book entitled *Into The Wild* by Jon Krakauer. It told the story of a 24 year old young man named Chris McCandless who hitchhiked to Alaska. Chris McCandless was from a wealthy but dysfunctional East Coast family. He had graduated with honors from Emory University in 1990. He had since spent time wandering in the Western part of the United States. He would pick up odd jobs from time to time to keep going. He was an avid reader. He was influenced particularly by the writings of Thoreau and Jack London. London's books *Call of the Wild* and *White Fang* influenced him to go to Alaska and live off the land.

As Chris was hitchhiking to his starting point he was picked up by James Gallien, a native Alaskan. When Gallien asked Chris his name he replied Alex. He had adopted the name Alexander Supertramp. When James Gallien heard of Chris's plans he tried to talk him out of it. He told him his survival gear and provisions were not adequate. Chris had no compass. Chris has few provisions, a bag of rice and a sleeping bag, and carried only a 22 rifle. It was early Spring and no experienced back packer would have attempted what he was about to do. Gallien even offered to drive Chris to Anchorage so he could get adequate gear but he refused. So Gallien dropped him off at the head of the Stampede Trail and Chris walked into the Alaskan wilderness.

Four months latter his decomposed body was discovered in an abandoned bus by a group of moose hunters. He had died of starvation. The carcass of a moose he had killed earlier lay outside the bus. Chris did not have the experience or the knowledge to preserve the meat. He left behind some journal entries. He had tried to walk out but found that the river was swollen from melting snow. He did not know that there was a hand trolley nearby that he could have used to cross the river. He did not know either how to or that he could have built a signal fire to alert aircraft that regularly flew over his location. He eventually crawled into his sleeping bag and starved to death.

Jon Krakauer's book made Chris some kind of mythic hero. Many native Alaskans have a different viewpoint. *Peter Christian is a park ranger the same age as Chris. He came to Alaska the same year Chris did. "Some like McCandless show up in Alaska, unprepared, unskilled, and unwilling to take the time to learn the skills they need to be successful. These quickly get into trouble and either die by bears, by drowning, by freezing or they are rescued by park rangers and other rescue personnel. When you consider McCandless from my perspective, you quickly see that what he did wasn't even particularly daring, just stupid, tragic, and inconsiderate."*

Where Chris's body was discovered was a piece of wood with the inscription "*Jack London is King*", *Alexander Supertramp May 1992.*

Apparently Chris did not know or either ignored the fact that Jack London's books were all fiction. London himself had spent only one winter in Alaska. London himself died at the age of 40 on his California estate. His death was suspected by some to be suicide. He was described as an alcoholic, obese and pathetic. Chris McCandless patterned his life after a false reality. *Chris in his last days had written a quote from Thoreau. "Rather than love, than money, than fame, give me truth."* He went to Alaska to find himself and lost his life tragically and needlessly.

Sean Penn read Krakauer's book and made it into a movie with the same title "Into the Wild". One reviewer said of the film "But though the film's structure may be tragic, its spirit is anything but. It is infused with an expansive, almost giddy sense of possibility, and it communicates a pure, unaffected delight in open spaces, fresh air, and bright sunshine."

Penn promotes the view that McCandless was an "*aesthetic voyager*". The film like the book it was based upon overlooks key facts in order to recreate Chris's image. Today many young people make the trek to the site where Chris died and leave notes to him. It has become a sort of shrine.

Life is about choices and choices have consequences. Our choices change our lives.

Chris McCandless Died Alone In an Abandoned Bus Because of the Choices He Had Made

Psalms 1 is about choices. Spurgeon calls this the Preface Psalm because it sets down basic truths that run throughout the Psalms. There are two ways in which a person may choose to live. (6) “the way of the righteous” or “the way of the ungodly”. This has been called the wisdom Psalm. These two life paths are seen throughout the wisdom literature particularly Proverbs and Ecclesiastes. God has given each of us the ability to choose a life direction. Those who choose the way of obedience to God will be blessed by God. The word is plural.

1. Be Careful of Worldly Influence (1)

A Series Of Decisions

The Psalmist is addressing who he identifies as “the righteous”. These are people who are in a covenant relationship with God. Salvation is a covenant relationship. God has promised us eternal life based upon the death, burial, and resurrection of His Son, Jesus.

1 Corinthians 11:25, “In the same manner He also took the cup after supper, saying, “This cup is the new covenant in My blood.”

The righteous are the redeemed and the ungodly are the unsaved.

- **The world’s believing**

“Who walks not in the counsel of the ungodly”

Their advice is based upon their values, views, beliefs, and perspectives. Don’t allow yourself to be carried along by the influence of ungodly counsel. This comes not only individually but through the media.

Colossians 2:8, “Beware lest anyone cheat you through philosophy and empty deceit, according to the tradition of men, according to the basic principles of the world, and not according to Christ.”

1 Corinthians 3:19, “For the wisdom of this world is foolishness with God.”

The world believes that things are more important than people. They begin with a wrong premise, evolution and materialism.

Do Not Arrive at Decisions by the World’s Reasoning

- **The world’s behaving**

“Nor stands in the path of sinners”

Behavior flows from belief. Bad choices come out of ignorance of truth, believing mistruths or ignoring truth. If I take the world’s counsel I will begin leaning into the world’s living.

Proverbs 12:26, “The righteous should choose his friends carefully, for the way of the wicked leads them astray.”

Do Not Align Your Life in the Direction of the World

- **The world’s belonging**

“Not sits in the seat of the scornful”

Sin is always descending. It eventually leads one to scorn righteousness. The ungodly are compelled to scoff at the righteous.

Proverbs 3:34, “Surely He scorns the scornful, but gives grace to the humble.”

Spurgeon, “The seat of the scornful may be very lofty but it is very near the gate of hell.”

1 Corinthians 15:33, “Do not be deceived: “Evil company corrupts good habits”.”

Do Not Agree With the World against the Godly

2. Be Centered Upon God’s Word (2-3)

Direction for Living Comes From Revelation

My choices need to be grounded in God’s Word.

- **Desire determines decision**

“But his delight is in the Law of the LORD”

The word means chief desire. People basically do what they want to do. What is influencing my desires?

Psalm 37:4, "Delight yourself also in the Lord, and He shall give you the desires of your heart."

Godly Desires Create Wise Choices

- **Revelation creates desire**

"And in His law he meditates day and night"

The word means to murmur or to mutter hence to ponder. This is a continual relating of God's Word to every day living.

Weirsbee, "Meditation is to the soul what digestion is to the body."

Psalm 119:24, "Your testimonies also are my delight and my counselors."

Wise Choices Are Informed By Revelation, Foolish Choices Are Informed By Opinion

Proverbs 28:26, "He who trusts in his own heart is a fool, but whoever walks wisely will be delivered."

- **Obedience brings blessing**

"He shall be like a tree planted by the rivers of water...and whatever he does shall prosper"

The tree is a metaphor in scripture for the life that glorifies God. It is a picture of true prosperity. Water for drinking is a symbol of the Holy Spirit. John 7:38-39, "He who believes in Me, as the Scripture has said, out of his heart will flow rivers of living water." But this He spoke concerning the Spirit, whom those believing in Him would receive.."

Water for cleansing is a symbol of the Word of God.

Ephesians 5:26, "that He might sanctify and cleanse her with the washing of water by the word."

Yielding to the Spirit in obedience to the Word God brings God's blessing into the believer's life.

Proverbs 10:22, "The blessing of the Lord makes one rich, and He adds no sorrow with it."

Spiritual and Material Blessings Flow From Wise Choices

3. Be Conscious of Coming Judgment (4-5)

Note the Contrast to the Ungodly

- **No lasting purpose or meaning**

"The ungodly are not so, but are like the chaff"

Chaff is the worthless part of the grain that is blown away by the wind at the time of threshing. In this life they can appear to be prospering and flourishing. No matter how high they grow and how much they flourish in this life at death they become like chaff.

Psalm 37:35-36, "I have seen the wicked in great power, and spreading himself like a native green tree. Yet he passed away, and behold, he was no more; indeed I sought him, but he could not be found."

They may even do kind and good things but they are without eternal value. From God's perspective they have no future.

There Is No Eternal Meaning to Life Apart From Jesus

- **No standing before God**

There is a future judgment and there will be a separation between the righteous and the ungodly. They will be excluded from the congregation of the righteous but not absent from the judgment.

For the ungodly all they can look forward to is "a certain fearful expectation of judgment" Hebrew 10:27.

Their sins have not been taken away by the blood of Christ.

1 John 4:10, "In this is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins."

There Is No Preparation for Eternity Apart From Jesus

- **No relationship with God**

“The Lord knows the way of the righteous but the way of the ungodly shall perish”

This means intimate knowledge and involvement. When a person chooses the beginning of a path they have chosen the destination it leads to. The Word of God reveals that ultimately there are only two ways.

Matthew 7:13-14, “Enter by the narrow gate; for wide is the gate and broad is the way that leads to destruction, and there are many who go in by it. Because narrow is the gate and difficult is the way which leads to life, and there are few who find it.”

(1) The choice to accept Jesus as My Savior

Romans 10:13, “For whoever calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved.”

(2) The choice to surrender my lie to Jesus as My Lord

Romans 12:1-2, “I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service. And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God.”

(3) The choice to submit daily to His will

Galatians 5:16, “I say then: Walk in the Spirit, and you shall not fulfill the lust of the flesh.”

Are The Choices I Am Making Revealing a Life That Is Preparing For Eternity?