

Psalm 1 | 4/5/20

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.

Structure:

A The way of the righteous

B Simile concerning the righteous (tree)

B' Simile concerning the wicked (chaff)

A' The way of the wicked

C Summary

I. Introductory Remarks

A. Psalms 1 & 2 form a preface to the book of Psalms. Therefore, we want to ask these kinds of questions as we read them in relation to the rest of the book:

1. What kind of tone do they set?
2. What themes/categories do they raise?

II. Psalm 1

A. Structure: see page 1

1. Chiasm: a way of structuring the psalm that make it look a bit like a sideways cone, where parallel ideas meet in the middle. Ps 1 is structured like this, so that A and A' are parallel (contrasting) ideas, and B and B' are parallel (contrasting) ideas. C is a summary statement.

A	The way of the righteous
B	Simile concerning the righteous (tree)
B'	Simile concerning the wicked (chaff)
A'	The way of the wicked
C	Summary

2. Chiasms are designed to highlight the comparisons and contrasts between the parallel ideas.

B. Verse 1

1. "Blessed"

- a. Could be translated "happy." Describes the person you wish you were, or who you want to be like.
- b. But it describes a person's *status*, not so much their *emotion*. "Envious" is probably a better but less poetic translation (Iain Duguid).

2. "Counsel": advice. (Not council, though that's related in English, of course).

3. "Walks → stands → sits": progression of verbs from less to more stationary, indicating increasing entrenchment in wickedness.

4. "Counsel → way → seat" (Dale Ralph Davis)

- a. Counsel of wicked: refers to the cues one follows. Suggests a way of thinking, mindset.
- b. Way of sinners: refers to the direction one takes. Suggests behavior/actions/practices.
- c. Seat of scoffers: refers to the company one keeps. Suggests a kind of belonging.

C. Verse 2

1. Strong contrast. The righteous man does NOT ... BUT RATHER, he does ...

2. The contrast between what the righteous man does not do and what he does
 - a. The thing that fills his mind, that he takes advice from, is not the wicked but the law of LORD.
 - b. Road metaphor: the righteous man doesn't walk down path of sinners, but rather he follows the path of God's word (this is a common metaphor; cf. Matt 7:13-14).
3. "The law of the LORD"
 - a. Hebrew word for "law": *torah*
 - b. Sometimes this refers to commands/prohibitions specifically ("do this; don't do that"), sometimes it refers to the Pentateuch (the first five books of the Bible), sometimes it refers more generally to God's *instruction* to his people (found in the entirety of the Bible).
 - c. So, "instruction" or "doctrine" or "teaching" fits the bill here
4. "Meditates"
 - a. This word means "to mutter, to make a low noise"—it's what doves do
 - b. Same word used in Ps 2, "Why do the nations rage, and the people plot in vain?" You can picture people huddling and muttering in low voices about how to get rid of the person they hate.
 - c. This is not mystic meditation, not an empty-your-mind-to-focus-on-nothingness-and-find-your-inner-peace meditation. Rather, it is recitative meditation—reciting God's word repeatedly and pondering over the words.
 - d. By memorizing Ps 1, you are obeying/fulfilling the psalm!
5. "Delight"
 - a. Does this make you think of any other psalms? (Ps 19, the law of the LORD is "sweeter than honey," "more precious than gold").
 - b. How can we delight in God's law?
 - c. Christians need balanced view of the law
 - i. Paul (though he had a balanced view of the law!) often talks about how the law is a burden we cannot bear. It reveals sin.
 - ii. Psalms usually talks about the law as a joy and delight: *when we are not using it to earn God's favor*, the law shows road of happiness. It revives the soul, makes us wise, makes our heart rejoice, enlightens our eyes, gives us great reward. Happiness and holiness are intimately connected.
 - iii. We must hold to both aspects of the law! Don't neglect the one aspect for the other.
 - d. Also, remember that we are not merely talking here specifically about commands and prohibitions. We are talking about all that God has revealed to us in his Word. This includes all the promises and good news in the Bible!

e. Ps 1 gives a beautiful cycle: the more you meditate on God's law, the more you will delight in it, because it is full of good things. The more you delight in it, the more you will want to meditate on it, and so on.

D. Verse 3

1. "Planted by streams of water"

- a. Planted: passive. Somebody intentionally put it there. It doesn't say "a tree which grows ..."; it says "a tree *planted*."
- b. Streams of water: literally, the word used here means *canals*. This is a man-made water source.
- c. The image here is of a garden of fruit trees, not a wild forest. It makes you wonder, "Who is the gardener?"

2. "Yields its fruit in season, and its leaf does not wither."

- a. There are both seasonal (yields its fruit in season) and constant (leaf does not wither) aspects here.
- b. This tree is alive, watered and cared for, fruit-bearing, prosperous

E. Verse 4

1. Strong contrast: "NOT SO the wicked ... BUT RATHER ..."

2. "Chaff"

- a. There is a wordplay with the words "tree" and "chaff" which highlights the contrast between the two. Do you see how similar the two phrases look in the original language?

"as a tree": בעץ

"as chaff" כמץ

b. Contrast between chaff and tree:

<u>Chaff</u>	<u>Tree</u>
light, thrown into wind	heavy/rooted/stable
dead/withered/dry	alive/not withering/watered
fruitless	fruitful
Waste/not wanted	Cared for—planted

3. "Wind"

- a. Hebrew word used here is *ruach*, which can mean wind, breath, or spirit
- b. The combination of wind/spirit/judgment is found throughout Bible. For example: Luke 3:16-17, "John answered them all, saying, 'I baptize you with water, but he who is mightier

than I am coming, the strap of whose sandals I am not worthy to untie. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire. ¹⁷ His winnowing fork is in his hand, to clear his threshing floor and to gather the wheat into his barn, but the chaff he will burn with unquenchable fire.”

F. Verse 5

1. Notice the contrast with verse 1:

Verse 1: the righteous are not with the wicked in this life

Verse 5: the wicked will not be with the righteous in the next life

G. Verse 6

1. “Know” here means far more than mere head knowledge. Notice that it is contrasted with wicked perishing. It means more like “watches over.”
2. This summary statement leaves you with two roads: you’re on one or the other.

III. Themes introduced in Psalm 1

A. The righteous and the wicked

1. The righteous man versus wicked men
2. The righteous path versus the wicked path

B. Metaphors introduced: road & agriculture

1. Trees: Num 24:5-6; Jer 17:8; Ezek 17:22-24; 19:10-14
2. Chaff: Lk 2:17; Matt 13:24-30
3. Path/road/way: Ps 119; Matt 7:14

C. The law of the LORD: Ps 19; 119

D. Judgment by the LORD

1. Vindication for the righteous
2. Condemnation for the wicked
3. Are you ever surprised by how much Jesus talks about judgment in the Gospels? Think of all the parables about judgment and the discourses on judgment that Jesus gives in the week before he is crucified. This is the hope of God’s people! When the Lord comes, he comes to judge, vindicating his righteous people and judging the wicked. So, when Jesus comes to establish his kingdom, with the coming of the king comes judgment. This is what Psalm 1 points to.

IV. Christ in Psalm 1

A. Christ is the supreme singer of Ps 1: he is the blessed righteous man.

1. He is the only truly righteous man. Jesus was perfectly righteous. He did not walk on the road of wickedness. He delighted completely in God’s law. He fulfilled the law perfectly. He is the blessed man.

2. But when you look at the life of Jesus in the Gospels, does anything surprise you as you compare it to Ps 1?

a. Psalm 1 man doesn't *look* like Jesus—he is described as “root out of dry ground” (Isa 53), not like a thriving tree! Jesus was treated as the cursed man.

b. Also, Jesus did spend time with sinners. This helps us see that what is in mind here in Psalm 1 is the *influence* of the wicked more than merely their *presence*.

3. Because Jesus was cursed, we can be blessed in him. John 15—Jesus is the vine, we are the branches engrafted into him.

4. But the way of blessing is by the way of the cross. Think about Matthew 5: how did Jesus describe those who are blessed? Blessed are ...

the poor in spirit

those who mourn

the meek

those who hunger and thirst for righteousness

the merciful

the pure in heart

the peacemakers

those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake

you when others revile you and persecute you and utter all kinds of evil against you falsely on my account.

5. Psalm 1 doesn't make sense without afterlife. In this life, the wicked *look* blessed and the righteous *look* cursed. We need a doctrine of resurrection for Ps 1 to make sense.

B. Christ is the returning singer: he is the judge.

1. Revelation 22:12-13, “Behold, I am coming soon, bringing my recompense with me, to repay each one for what he has done. I am the Alpha and the Omega, the first and the last, the beginning and the end.”

V. Application

A. Psalm 1 leads us to confession (remember how Paul says that law condemns us by revealing our sin to us): we all act like wicked men, don't we? Can any of us say that we always delight in God's word? That we thinking wicked thoughts or act wickedly or keep company with wicked people? Psalm 1 confronts us with our sin.

B. Discussion on “In whatever he does, he prospers”:

1. There is a natural connection between delighting in God's law and prospering, between holiness and happiness.

2. But it doesn't always look like this in this life. This verse must be seen in light of the long game—the resurrection.
3. How does following a crucified Messiah change the way we understand “prosper”?
4. Phil 3:10-11, “... that I may know him and the power of his resurrection, and may share his sufferings, becoming like him in his death, that by any means possible I may attain the resurrection from the dead.”