



Psalm 1

DEVOTIONAL STUDY GUIDE

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Devotional Study Guide

Psalm 1

Introduction: Psalm 1 operates as an introduction of sort to the rest of the Psalms. It touches on two themes that occur throughout the book of Psalms: the blessedness of righteousness and the misery of the wicked. While this first psalm presents two ways of life (the way of the righteous and the way of the wicked), the key subject is the centrality and importance of God's Word to life and the fruitfulness of those who love His Word.

DAY 1

Blessed is the man that walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor standeth in the way of sinners, nor sitteth in the seat of the scornful.

We all have a choice to make. Do we walk the path that leads to God; a path that is narrow, filled with highs and lows, peaks and valleys, but ultimately a path that leads to everlasting life? Or do we walk the path that leads away from God; a path that presents itself as easy going, requiring very little commitment but ultimately leads to destruction and brokenness?

Verse 1 tells us that the person who chooses to enter the path that leads to God is blessed. That word "blessed," based on the position it is in the text, is used in an exclamatory manner. In Hebrew, "blessed" is plural literally meaning "blessings." It is designed to emphasize the multiplicity of blessings to those will fulfill the requirements later outlined in the psalm. By placing this emphasis on the word "blessed," the writer wants us to know that the sinful life is not the good life.

If we are going to dedicate ourselves to living for Christ and pleasing God, then not only do we have to make a choice to walk the path that leads to God but we also have to be mindful of the kind of people that would lead us astray, those who would lead us down a path away from God. This does not mean that we are to isolate ourselves completely because we do have a responsibility to share the love of Christ. However, we cannot become complicit in our walk with others as we journey towards Christ.

Based on verse 1, there are 3 actions that we must avoid, 3 regressions away from God and progressions into a sinful life. First, we cannot follow along with the purpose, plan, or viewpoint of those who are guided and controlled by the desires, impulses or emotions of the flesh rather than the Word ("walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly"). Second, we cannot become influenced and develop the same patterns or behaviors as those who have deliberately chosen a life opposed to God ("standeth in the way of sinners"). Third, we cannot become content or comfortable with not actively engaging with God and His Word ("sitteth in the seat of the scornful"). We cannot develop the habitual practice of putting down the things of God, thereby rejecting Him and becoming indifferent.

Psalm 1:1 poses as a warning to us. It teaches us how little by little we can step out of the place of blessedness and into a place of misery. So, how we can avoid this?

DAY 2

But his delight is in the law of the Lord; and in his law doth he meditate day and night.

Verse 2 provides us with our answer to yesterday's devotional. How can we avoid walking in the counsel of the ungodly, standing in the way of sinners, and sitting in the seat of scoffers? How can we avoid being drawn away from God? We can avoid all of this by staying connected to God's Word.

The more time we spend with God, the closer our fellowship with Him will become, and the more we will be able to live a life that is pleasing to Him.

"Day and night" in the text is an expression meaning constantly, consistently, and regularly. The blessedness of a person is directly dependent upon his/her relationship with God's Word.

The word "meditates" denotes a habitual action and is a comprehensive term that involves thinking about what Scripture means and how, when, and where it should be applied.

We must study to show ourselves approved (2 Timothy 2:15).

We must daily abide in God's Word (John 8:31).

We must feed on God's Word, continuously being nourished by the spiritual milk and meat of the written word of God.

Personal Reflection Questions

1. In verse 1, there are 3 warnings about what to avoid? What are some behaviors in my own life that I need to avoid so that I am not drawn away from God?
2. In verse 2, the psalmist describes a positive key in being blessed: delighting in the law of the Lord and meditating on God's Word. In today's world, what does it look like to take delight in God's Word?
3. What is the biggest practical hindrance to develop a rhythm of reading and meditating on Scripture? What is something you can do to avoid this?
4. What are some things that motivate me to meditate on God's Word?

DAY 3

And he shall be like a tree planted by the rivers of water, that bringeth forth his fruit in his season; his leaf also shall not wither; and whatsoever he doeth shall prosper.

In the first two verses, we have seen that the blessed man does not associate or find permanent company with the wicked but takes joy in studying and meditating on God's Word. In this particular verse, the psalmist lays out exactly what it means to be blessed. A blessed person is like a tree planted by streams of water. In some Middle Eastern countries, you tend to find wadis, areas in the middle of the wilderness that only get periodic rain and are dry for the rest of the time. One who is blessed is not like a wadi; instead he/she is like a tree that has been planted by streams of water being continually fed by life-giving water. The person who meditates on God's Word is always bearing fruit; since he/she is constantly taking in God's Word, their minds and understanding are being conformed to Biblical wisdom. Also, because of the strength and life the blessed person gets from God's Word, their leaves "do not wither." The life one has through God's Word will continue to be sustenance.

With constant meditation on God's life-giving Word, a blessed person will be successful and prosper. Real prosperity results from the work of God in the life of one who meditates on His Word. The man of blessedness prospers first because he/she always seeks to operate in the framework of God's will according to God's values and purposes. As one who delights and meditates in the Word, Scripture is consulted and used as a guide for whatever one does.

Note: this prospering may not always occur through material prosperity. The righteous person might well prosper materially, but more importantly, he/she is being fed by constant streams of water and is bearing fruit in season. Spiritually, he/she is very prosperous. Their life is one that testifies to the work of God, and whose thoughts, words, and desires are shaped by God's Word. After all, the true measure of a successful like is hearing the Lord say, "well done my good and faithful servant." A prosperous life is a life lived for the Lord. And we can only know what that means if we are grounding in God's Word, meditating upon it "day and night."

Practical Consideration

While many of us may know and understand the benefits associated with reading, studying, and meditating on God's Word, it sometimes becomes difficult to maintain the habit and spiritual discipline of doing so considering all of life's challenges and responsibilities. Even as we sit here 6 months into a national pandemic, there are financial strains we are fighting through, health challenges, an upcoming election, social justice issues, parents having to now be both parent and teacher, amongst a myriad of other "adulting" challenges. Some of us are busier now than ever before so finding the time, whether day or night, to read and meditate on God's Word may be a bit challenging. But allow the promise of Psalm 1:3 to push us all in our

willingness to wake up a little earlier, to carve out time dedicated to God and His Word. May our heart's desire be to serve the Lord faithfully and to soak in God's Word so that we may be fit for the task ahead.

DAY 4

The ungodly are not so: but are like the chaff which the wind driveth away.

As we look at the second half of Psalm 1, here is a recap of verses 1-3.

The blessed person is one who has said no to the ways of the wicked and yes to the ways of God. They are able to do this by meditating and delighting in the word of God day and night. It is an obsession of sorts; there is no area of life excluded from the reign and rule of God. The trajectory of this Godward life is that one becomes like a tree planted by streams of water. This tree suffers no lack and like a good and healthy tree does, produces fruit in season and its leaves do not wither. In all that they do, they prosper which is also a benefit to others.

Now we find ourselves in verse 4. By way of contrast, psalmist informs us that the wicked are not like that. Instead of being a deeply rooted and fruitful tree, the wicked are like chaff (husks and straw thrown away in the threshing process) that the wind drives away. The way of the wicked is nothing like the way of the righteous. They have completely different sources of living, purposes, character and ultimately they have different results temporally and eternally.

While the primary emphasis here is to the unbeliever, there are applications for the believer who continues to live a life of carnality thereby becoming and looking like the wicked.

“The wicked,” a key word used four times in Psalm 1, is the primary word used to describe the unrighteous. One of the basic ideas associated with this word is loose or unstable, and so it means to be loose ethically. But this would only occur if one was first negative towards God, cut loose and excluded from a life with God and the control and stability that God brings into the lives of those who have fellowship with Him. Additionally, “wicked” refers to a restless unquiet condition which runs from one thing to another seeking happiness and peace, often times at the expense of others. Restlessness occurs within those who are out of touch with God, whose hope and trust is not in the Lord and who, in their unsatisfied state, are propelled forward in a search for whatever it is they think will give peace, satisfaction, security, and significance.

While the righteous cling to God, love His Word, and as a result are restrained, stable and upright, the wicked forsake God, ignore His Word and as a result are unrestrained, oppressive, and unjust.

Even though genuine believers cannot lose their salvation, there is the danger of living like the unrighteous in carnal indifference, perhaps very religious, but out of fellowship with God. The church of Corinth is an illustration of this. Paul warned them that in their state of carnality and

failure to grow, they were walking like mere men (1 Corinthians 3:1-4). Our challenge today is not become like the unrighteous or the wicked. Let us hold on to the profession of our faith (Hebrews 10:23) and commit to walking the path of the righteous that has been laid out in God's Word.

Personal Reflection Questions

1. What are some practical steps you can take to avoid looking and behaving like the unrighteous?
2. The righteous are known for clinging to God and His Word. In this season, what is one (or two) scriptures that you will cling on to help you endure?

DAY 5

Therefore the ungodly shall not stand in the judgement, nor sinners in the congregation of the righteous.

As we begin to wrap up the study of Psalm 1, the psalmist is now laying out the outcomes of the wicked. In verse 3, we saw the results of the blessed or righteous man and here in verse 5, we will see the results of the wicked man.

On judgement day, we will all have to give our own account for our decisions and actions. Unbelievers will face God at the great white throne of judgement, but they will not be able to withstand or endure the judgement of God. They will be separated and cast out because they are found without God's righteousness.

As of result of God's judgement, "sinners," or those without the righteousness of Christ, will be excluded from receiving the eternal blessings of God's presence that will be enjoyed by all who stand in relation to God by faith in Christ.

Charles Spurgeon explains that the wicked "shall stand there to be judged, but not to be acquitted. Fear shall lay hold upon them there; they shall not stand their ground; they shall flee away; they shall not stand in their own defense; for they shall blush and be covered with eternal contempt."

So, while the wicked will not stand, saved sinners will be acquitted before God because the judge Christ was judged for them at Calvary.

DAY 6

For the Lord knoweth the way of the righteous: but the way of the ungodly shall perish.

Not only do the righteous live as trees planted by streams of water, the psalmist also tells us in verse 6 that the Lord knows the way of the righteous. This “knowing” is not about mere knowledge, but it implies affection and approval. It is often used in Scripture in a protective sense, referring to God’s providential care and love which includes the eternal security of believers and divine provision.

On the other hand, the wicked or “ungodly” are those bent on getting all they can out of life with little to no concern for God and eternity. In essence, the wicked live primarily for this life. Their way is the way of man, the flesh and they cannot stand before the righteousness of God. Their way of life gains them nothing with God, so it will perish. Whereas the outcome for the wicked is destruction, the outcome for the righteous is a welcoming by God and a preserving of their lives.

In summary, the psalmist draws out a contrast between a well-watered tree and a worthless chaff, between the righteous and unrighteous, between the blessed and the wicked. Robert Frost in his poem “The Road Not Taken” writes in his closing stanza:

I shall be telling this with a sigh
Somewhere ages and ages hence:
Two roads diverged in a wood, and I—
I took the one less traveled by,
And that has made all the difference.

This stanza mirrors the theme in Psalm 1. In this life, there are only two roads. There is no middle ground. Everyone will walk down one road or the other. These sobering words can also remind us of Matthew 7:13, Matthew 7:15, Matthew 7:21, and Matthew 7:24; there are two ways/gates, two fruits, two destinies and two foundations. We all have a choice to make. Do we walk the path that leads to God; a path that is narrow, filled with highs and lows, peaks and valleys, but ultimately a path that leads to everlasting life? Or do we walk the path that leads away from God; a path that presents itself as easy going, requiring very little commitment but ultimately leads to destruction and brokenness?