

* The Heights Baptist Church * Series: The Psalms *
* Topic: Wisdom * Psalm 1 * 3/30/25 *

MAIN POINT

The only ways to thrive spiritually is to avoid jumping into the ways of the world, and to stay connected to God through His nourishing Word.

INTRODUCTION

Do you consider yourself to have a green thumb? Any fun success stories or failures with gardening or houseplants?

What are some key things you need to do if you want to have a beautiful or productive garden?

In today's lesson, we will look at Psalm 1. In this Psalm, we see that we have a choice; we can be like a thriving tree, or like chaff, that the wind blows away. We have free will to choose, but we don't have the freedom to control the consequences of our choice. Choose wisely!

UNDERSTANDING

ASK A VOLUNTEER TO READ PSALM 1:1-2

What two types of people are contrasted in these verses?

What two attributes lead to blessing according to these verses?

Psalm 1 presents a stark contrast between those who delight in the Word of God and those who choose the path of wickedness. Those who choose not to take the path of the wicked and who delight in God's Law are described as blessed. God gives us the freedom to choose how we will live our lives, but not the freedom to choose the consequences of our choice.

According to these verses, what are we to do if we want to be blessed?

Don't walk in the counsel of the wicked, don't stand in the way of sinners, don't sit in the seat of scoffers.

Note to study leader. *The definitions for these Hebrew words are from the Blue Letter Bible App.*

- *Blessed (eser): Happiness, blessedness. The KJV translates this Word as "blessed" 27 times and as "happy" 18 times in the Old Testament.*
- *Walk in step with (halak esa): to go or walk + counsel or advice.*
- *Stand in the way (amad derek): to stand or remain + road, path, or direction.*
- *Sit in the company of (mosab yasab): Seat, assembly, or location + to dwell, remain, sit, or abide.*
- *Wicked (rasa): Wicked, criminal, one guilty of sin.*
- *Sinners (hatta): Sinners, sinful, those reckoned as offenders.*
- *Mockers (lus): To scorn, or talk arrogantly.*

How do these three different descriptions work together to paint a picture of what we are to avoid?

Some look at these three descriptions as getting progressively worse. At least this pictures three different but equally bad ways we can get off of the straight and narrow path and on to the broad path that leads to destruction. Actively buying into worldly philosophy and values; hanging out with the wrong crowd, and choosing to remain with and become comfortable with arrogant sinners who reject God.

ASK VOLUNTEERS TO READ PROVERBS 13:20 AND 1 CORINTHIANS 15:33

How does avoiding these three practices lead to blessing?

It is clear from these verses that we become like those we spend the most time with.

What do you think of the following statement: Who you spend your quality time with is just as important as what you believe.

What we believe is very important. But if we become like those we spend the most time with, it is also very important who we spend most of our quality time with.

ASK A VOLUNTEER TO READ COLOSSIANS 3:9-10

How do these verses add to the two parts of obtaining God's blessing describe in Psalm 1:1-2?

We need to put off the old (sinful, worldly) self, and put on the new self (our new nature in Christ).

How do we balance this with the example of Jesus, who is described in Matthew 11:19 as being "a friend of tax collectors and sinners"?

Those who followed Jesus in scripture are told they would become fishers of men (Matt. 4:19), and commanded in scripture to do the work of an evangelist (2 Timothy 4:5). But friendship evangelism does NOT mean friendship with the world (James 4:4). We need to find our deepest human inputs from committed Christians while reaching out to others in love.

Verse 2 starts with the Word "but", which shows that verse 2 is providing a contrast with verse 1. What two habits are described in this verse that leads to God's blessing?

Delighting in the Law of the LORD and meditating on his law day and night.

Note to study leader. Definitions for these Hebrew Words are from the Blue Letter Bible App.

- *Delight (hepes): delight, pleasure, or longing.*
- *Meditating (haga): to meditate, muse, imagine, or mutter.*

What is the difference between just reading God's Word and delighting in and meditating it?

When we are reading through the Bible, we need to do more than just try to get through it quickly to complete a daily reading plan. We need to prayerfully, expectantly, and thoughtfully digest what God is teaching us through it.

ASK VOLUNTEERS TO READ JEREMIAH 15:16, JOHN 17:17, AND 2 TIMOTHY 3:16-17

Why does delighting in God's Word lead to the kind of blessed life the psalmist is describing?

God's Word is living and active, and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting, and training in righteousness. So it shows us the way we should go, it shows us when we get off track, it helps us get back on track, and it helps us continue on the right track. It is our spiritual food, and it sanctifies us. We need to view it spiritually like we view food physically. God's word is something in which we are to delight, and realize it is what God uses to sustain and develop our spiritual life. And just like we savor food, we need to meditate on God's word, not just quickly read through it.

Would anyone like to describe a time when you have seen the blessings of God when you have meditated on and delighted in God's Word?

As the discussion leader, you may want to share a personal example from your own life here too.

ASK A VOLUNTEER TO READ PSALM 1:3-5

To what does the psalmist compare the blessed person who avoids the ways of wicked people and who delights in and meditates on the Law of the LORD?

This blessed person is like a tree planted by streams of water. The water is the source of life, and the tree (unlike grass) has roots deep enough to tap into the stream.

What is pictured by the streams of water?

The stream provides life-giving nourishment, meaning this tree is no longer dependent on the weather for its life. Based on verses 1 and 2, the stream would be the Law of the LORD.

What three blessings come to this tree, and what do these three blessings describe?

It bears fruit, its leaf does not wither, and whatever it does prospers. God will spiritually bless our lives, we will grow in our walk with him, and He will bless our ministries. We know from the rest of scripture that this isn't referring to physical health and wealth, or necessarily an outwardly successful ministry (think of the Old Testament prophets), but spiritual blessings as we walk with him.

Verse 4 provides quite a contrast to the tree. To what are the wicked compared, and why is this a good picture?

The wicked are compared to chaff (useless seed coverings and debris separated from the good seed by the winnowing process). The chaff is blown away by the wind, to be seen no more, while the good seed remains. This shows the ultimate fate of the wicked, who face God's judgment in the future.

ASK VOLUNTEERS TO READ PSALM 1:6 AND MATTHEW 7:13-14

How does Psalm 1:6 provide a great summary to this Psalm?

When we seek God through his word and by choosing the right path, He will watch over us. But those who choose to take the way of the wicked will be destroyed.

APPLICATION

How can you grow in your delight in God's Word? Is there any tangible change you need to make in your schedule in order to prioritize and plan a time to meditate on and delight in God's Word?

Is there any area in my life where I have become too comfortable walking in the way of sinners, or standing in the way of sinners, or sitting in the seat of mockers that I need to remove from my life?

PRAYER

Thank God for our spiritual blessings in Christ. Pray that we would consistently spend time in God's living active Word, and delight in it. Pray that the Holy Spirit would teach and counsel us from His Word. Pray that God would give us the grace, wisdom, and self-discipline to choose not to walk in step with the wicked, stand in the way of sinners, sit in the company of mockers, but to be a light to them.

COMMENTARY

PSALM 1

1:1. The psalmist began by declaring how blessed is the person who chooses the way of the righteous rather than the way of the wicked. The righteous do not follow the advice of the wicked or take the path of sinners. By contrast, the wicked begin by following a wayward person's advice or by acting on the principles that govern the wicked person's life. Wicked or ungodly people leave God and His will out of their thinking and understanding. They are out of step with God's standards of proper conduct.

"Blessed", or as some Bible versions translate it, "happy", comes from a different Hebrew Word than the Word that is usually translated as "blessed." The Word in Psalm 1:1 expresses the sense of joy and satisfaction in one's state or circumstances. This state is the result of blessing that comes from trust in and obedience to Yahweh (Psalm 34:8; 40:4; 84:5; 89:15). The three descriptions that follow are expressed in the negative, showing what is not characteristic of this man.

1:2. The Hebrew Word torah is translated as "law," but it also conveys the idea of teaching or instruction. It is the revelation of God's will for His people rather than a just body of legislative material or a collection of judicial decisions, which is what we might associate it to when thinking of the English Word "law." Yahweh's instruction is not a burden (Dt 30:11; 1Jn 5:3) but a delight for those who trust in Him. "Meditating" (from Hb root hgh; Jos 1:8) has a literal meaning of mumbling to oneself, an activity closely related to concentrating on something in order to understand it. The righteous person delights in the law and also meditates on it day and night. The emphasis is upon the centrality of God's law and a constant referral to it as the source of counsel from God. The expression day and night implies more than a hurried and casual reading of a portion of it each day.

The Word "Law" occurs about 220 times in the Old Testament and refers to the Scriptures Israel had up to that point in time, particularly the five books of Moses. Righteous people are those who not only refuse to do what the ungodly do, but who focus on the Word of God. The goal is to learn, obey, and delight in God's Word.

1:3. Those who build their lives in obedience to the Lord are like a tree that has been planted beside streams of water. When believers choose the way of the righteous and make the Word of God the source of nourishment for our lives, God plants us like the farmer plants vines and fruit trees by a more than adequate source of life-giving water. God's Word is that life-giving and behavior-molding stream. Three results occur. First, the righteous are like the tree that bears its fruit in season. Second, the righteous will be like the tree whose leaf does not wither. God's Word is like water that feeds our souls and prevents external forces from causing us to shrivel. Neglecting God's Word will cause the spiritual elements in our lives to wither. Third, for righteous people, everything they do prospers. Because they reject the advice of the wicked, the path of the sinners, and actions of the mockers, the things that they do come from practicing the teachings of God's Word.

The image of the righteous as flourishing trees is a common metaphor (Psalm 92:12-14; Jer. 17:8). Bearing fruit is an extension of the metaphor and refers to the products of the spiritual life in the individual (Pr. 12:12; Jn 15:5; Col 1:10).

1:4 Verses 1-3 looked at the behavior of the two types of people. The contrast now shifts to a focus on the destiny of the two ways. Chaff, the useless product of threshing, is a contrast to the fruit in the previous verse. The wicked will ultimately be carried away by the wind (Hos 13:3), being separated from what is useful and valuable.

The psalmist did not have much to say about the wicked. He began by observing: the wicked are not like the righteous. They practice evil. They are not planted by streams of life-giving water. They do not delight in learning and obeying God's Word. Instead, they are like dry, dead, worthless husks that had to be separated from the grain. These husks are blown away by the wind, never to be seen again.

1:5. Unforgiven sinners will not survive the judgment, and will have no part in the community of the righteous. Standing has the idea of being able to remain (or survive) during the time of judgment. Unforgiven sinners will be judged and removed from the scene.

1:6 The final summary shows what is anticipated for those who follow the two ways: God's protection for the righteous and disaster (or ruin) for the wicked. People have a choice as to which way they choose, but they don't have a choice as to the outcome of each way. To those who choose the way of the righteous, the Lord watches over their way. On judgment day God will know which way each person chose and will reward or punish accordingly. How blessed is the person whose delight is in the Word of God and who reads it, delights in it, meditates on it day and night, and then puts it into practice in daily living.