

PSALMS OF PRAYER AND PRAISE

Psalm 1: Two Ways of Life Contrasted

Psalm 1:1-6 (NASB)

¹“How blessed is the man who does not walk in the counsel of the wicked, Nor stand in the path of sinners, Nor sit in the seat of scoffers!

²But his delight is in the law of the LORD, And in His law he meditates day and night.

³He will be like a tree *firmly* planted by streams of water, Which yields its fruit in its season And its leaf does not wither; And in whatever he does, he prospers.

⁴The wicked [ungodly] are not so, But they are like chaff which the wind drives away.

⁵Therefore the wicked will not stand in the judgment, Nor sinners in the assembly of the righteous.

⁶For the LORD knows the way of the righteous, But the way of the wicked will perish.”

The “Blessed” Man

Psalm 1 is a perfect introduction to the book of Psalms because its subject matter is the blessedness of those who live righteous lives and the emptiness and misery of those who are ungodly. Two classes of people are dealt with: **the righteous (godly) and the wicked (ungodly)**. The psalm is a striking study in contrasts. In the description of the “blessed” there is a series of negatives: This man does not walk in the counsel of the ungodly; he does not stand in the way of sinners; he does not sit in the seat of the scornful. It takes more energy to walk than stand, and sitting down implies consent and agreement with the God-mockers.

Following the negatives, the godly person’s positive qualities are highlighted: “*His delight is in the law of the Lord ...*” Delight implies study, pleasure, and thought. Meditate means ponder. So to delight and meditate on God’s law, one must first have it in mind, as Explorer’s Bible Study encourages!

“*He shall be like a tree planted by the rivers of water*” (verse 3) describes one whose roots are deep and always refreshed by the water of God’s Holy Spirit.

Psalm 1:3 (NASB)

³“He will be like a tree *firmly* planted by streams of water, Which yields its fruit in its season And its leaf does not wither; And in whatever he does, he prospers.”

Water is often used to depict the Holy Spirit in scripture. (See John 7:37–39).

John 7:37-39 (NASB)

³⁷ “Now on the last day, the great *day* of the feast, Jesus stood and cried out, saying, “If anyone is thirsty, let him come to Me and drink.

³⁸ He who believes in Me, as the Scripture said, ‘From his innermost being will flow rivers of living water.’”

³⁹ But this He spoke of the Spirit, whom those who believed in Him were to receive; for the Spirit was not yet *given*, because Jesus was not yet glorified.”

The blessed man planted by the rivers of water will also bear fruit which will glorify God. [Galatians 5:22–23](#) uses the word picture “fruit” to describe the outward working of the Holy Spirit: “*But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control.*”

Psalm 1:3 (NASB)

³ “He will be like a tree *firmly* planted by streams of water, Which yields its fruit in its season And its leaf does not wither; And in whatever he does, he prospers.”

[Verse 3](#) ends with the phrase “*whatever he does, he prospers.*” This need not be considered in a commercial sense, equating success in the world with biblical “prospering.” The world’s standard of prosperity is quite different than God’s. A worldly definition of success might measure “things,” status, and material goods.

Jesus’ parable of the rich farmer ([Luke 12](#)) ends with a caution not to be rich in things, but to be rich toward God. Jesus also astounded his disciples in [Mark 10:23](#) saying, “*How hard it will be for those who are wealthy to enter the kingdom of God.*”

Mark 10:23 (NASB)

²³ “And Jesus, looking around, said to His disciples, “How hard it will be for those who are wealthy to enter the kingdom of God!”

Prosperity in God’s economy is often overlooked by the world: the greatest in God’s kingdom is the least ([Luke 9:48](#)).

The Ungodly Man

Psalm 1:4 (NASB)

⁴ “The wicked [ungodly] are not so, But they are like chaff which the wind drives away.”

“*The ungodly are not so.*” Every person who is not a professing servant of God is not always an offender of all moral obligations. Often they are of high moral standards and are greatly respected. But this is not the final standard. God’s tests go through to the very roots of character and motives, and the standard is allegiance to God.

The test is—God’s servant or not? This prepares us for the sharp contrast in this psalm: godly or ungodly. **“The ungodly are not so.”** The psalmist does not dwell on the details of ungodliness. He confines himself to indicating the source of their life.

In this psalm, we have the fountain heads of moral character. All true fruitfulness of character is found in God’s garden only; in being planted by God’s hand and by God’s rivers. All barrenness and uselessness result from not being there. A person may be respected and religious and yet be ungodly.

Regardless of one’s own righteousness or standing before others, it is in the sight of God that one is characterized as **“godly”** or **“ungodly.”** The **“ungodly”** have come short of God’s requirement. The Bible says they are like chaff which has no nutritional value. Chaff has no power to reproduce and is driven away by the wind. Character, before God, stands forth in its naked truthfulness. The counsel of the ungodly will not abide and he who walks in it is driven away like chaff. We personally choose character. The choice is ours. We choose what we are. Judgment does not make character, but declares it. Blaming others for what we do dates back to the dialogue with Eve and Satan. We should assume personal responsibility for our conduct and character. Character should be guarded with care and love. An individual is either living for God or isn’t. **“For the Lord knows the way of the righteous.”**

Psalm 1:6 (NASB)

6 “For the LORD knows the way of the righteous, But the way of the wicked will perish.”

Study Procedure: Read the Scripture references before answering questions. Unless otherwise instructed, use the Bible only in answering questions. Some questions may be more difficult than others but try to answer as many as you can. Pray for God’s wisdom and understanding as you study and don’t be discouraged if some answers are not obvious at first. Do not read study notes for this lesson until AFTER you have completed your questions.

FIRST DAY: Read [Psalm 1](#)

1. The blessed person does not do three things. What are they?
2. (a) How are you exposed to wicked counsel, way of sinners, or seat of the scornful?

(b) What does God’s Word say about sinful influences? Read [James 4:7](#) and [Proverbs 4:20–27](#).
3. (a) According to [verse 2](#), what brings delight?

(b) What action can you take to ensure you have this delight? See [Psalm 119:16, 33–35](#).
4. (a) What does meditate mean? (May use a Bible or dictionary.)

- (b) How do you do this? What is your personal meditation plan? If you don't have one, develop one to enhance your study.
5. (a) Give the poetic phrases describing a person immersed in God's Word. Use [Jeremiah 17:7-8](#) for additional details.
- (b) Draw similarities between a fruitful tree and a godly person. Use [John 15:5-8](#) and [Galatians 5:16-25](#) in your answer.
6. (a) In contrast to the godly person, what poetic words describe the ungodly? Use [Jeremiah 17:5-6](#) also.
- (b) Draw similarities between chaff and a person without God.
7. There are two possible "ways" in life: obedience or disobedience to God. What is the end result of each path? Use [Proverbs 14:12](#) and [Deuteronomy 30:15-20](#) in your answer.