

Psalm 1

We are about to begin one of the most loved books in the Bible. The Psalms have been used at funerals, to comfort those who have lost a loved one and have also, been read for comfort and joy. The most prominent of the penmen, was David. More than 72 of the Psalms are attributed to him. Some of the other penmen are: 12 attributed to Asaph, 12 by the sons of Korah, 2 by Solomon, 1 by Moses, 1 by Ethan and over 40 that the penman is unknown. I believe that many of the unknown are also from David. There are 150 chapters in this book of Psalms. The longest chapter in the Bible is the 119 chapter of Psalms. It contains 176 verses. Some of the Psalms are so personal in nature that you feel as if you are eavesdropping on a conversation the penman had with God. Many of the chapters are instructions for the proper way to worship. There are many lessons to be learned in this book for us today.

Jesus frequently quoted from the book of Psalms. There are well over a hundred quotations in the New Testament (by various penmen), taken from the book of Psalms. The book of Psalms is a book of prophecy, as well. The birth, crucifixion, resurrection, and the second coming of Christ are all spoken of in Psalms.

As in no other of the books, we see a fellowship with the spirit of man and almighty God. As in all of the other Bible studies, we will be looking at the spiritual side of this book. The Christians, as well as the Hebrews, have used the book of Psalms in their worship services. The Hebrews sang from the book of Psalms as they entered their place of worship. Perhaps, Jesus and the disciples sang from the Psalms after sharing the Passover feast.

Matthew 26:30 "And when they had sung a hymn, they went out into the mount of Olives."

We do know, from the Scripture above, that they sang.

The Psalms are written as poetry. As we said above, the Psalms are prayers and praise toward Almighty God. David wrote the most popular Psalm, the 23rd. Many people have memorized this particular Psalm. In it, we find that Jesus is the great Shepherd, and we believers are His sheep. David makes us aware of the supernatural care that God takes of His sheep. Notice that David calls God Lord in this chapter. Then he goes on to describe the blissful state the man has with His Lord. I won't quote it here and ruin it for the lesson. We will find in this first lesson, actually the message of the entire book. The blessings for those who make God their Lord, and the punishments for those who do not.

Verses 1-6: This wisdom psalm basically functions as an introduction to the entire book of Psalms. Its theme is as big as the whole Bible because it tells of people, paths, and ultimate destinations (for a significant parallel, see Jer. 17:5-8). By two cycles of contrast, Psalm 1 separates all people into their respective spiritual categories:

1. By observation, all people are separated ethically (1:1-4).

- A. A picture of the Godly (1:1-3).

- B. A Picture of the Ungodly (1:4).
- 2. By outcome, all people are separated judicially (1:5-6).
 - A. The Failure of Ungodly People (1:5).
 - B. The Fruition of Lifestyles (1:6).
 - 1. Recognition of the Godly.
 - 2. Ruination of the ungodly (1:6b).

“Psalm 1”: The key word in the Psalm is the word “Blessed”. It serves here as a pronouncement upon a man, but a certain kind of man. In essence, the psalm is teaching that the blessed or happy man is the righteous man. The happy man avoids evil influences, deeds, and attitudes (verse 1); he delights in God’s Word (verse 2); Therefore, God causes him to prosper (verse 3). On the other hand, the “ungodly” is worth no more than “chaff” (verse 4), and his destiny is judgment (verse 5). Finally, the evaluation by the Lord Himself is described (verse 6). There is an ellipsis which is understood with both clauses in verse 6: “For the Lord knoweth the way of the righteous” [and it will be blessed], “but” [He also knows] “the way of the ungodly” [and it] “shall perish”. The psalm forms an appropriate introduction to the Psalter since it sets before the readers the three characters who will figure mostly in the psalms: the righteous, the ungodly and God.

Psalm 1:1 "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."

“Blessed”: The word “blessed” means “happy” or “inward joy is theirs” (Matt. 5:3-12). An exclamation of strong emotion, it results from deep reflection on a subject. The psalmist paints a picture of the gravitational pull of evil.

From the perspective of the individual, this is a deep-seated joy and contentment in God; from the perspective of the believing community, it refers to redemptive favor (compare the blessings and cursings of (Deut. 27:11 – 28:6).

“The counsel of the ungodly” refers to advice that encourages people to live evil lives without concern for righteousness or obedience to God (26:4-5; Prov. 4:14). The ungodly move from counsel to walking on the “path” to settling into the “seat” as they embrace an evil way of life.

Just as the Sermon on the Mount began with blessings, we see this book of Psalms begins with blessings. Blessed, in the verse above, is not speaking of a single blessing, but of walking in blessings from God. To be blessed of God means that we are walking in the salvation that Jesus purchased for us with His precious blood. We are walking in the righteousness of Christ. Notice in the statement (the man), this is an individual thing. Though there may be many worldly people living next to this person, he or she has decided not to walk in the counsel of the worldly. This is a deliberate decision on this person's part. This person may be walking alone. The following Scripture describes the walk of the person who decides not to walk in the counsel of the ungodly.

Galatians 2:20 "I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me."

The word (walketh), means to continually walk. Notice the progression here. At first, he is walking, then he is standing, then last he is sitting. This shows that we must not fellowship with those of unbelief. When you stop and stand, you are giving more time than walking, and sitting requires even more time. The scornful can be either someone who professes belief and feels he is so much better than the average, or it could be those who totally reject Christianity. We would call him an atheist. We need to see in this that fellowshiping with those of unbelief is dangerous. A believer in Christ is cautioned not to fellowship with those of unbelief. Light and darkness cannot prevail in the same place.

2 Corinthians 6:14 "Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers: for what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? and what communion hath light with darkness?"

True happiness comes from fellowship with God, not with the world.

Psalm 1:2 "But his delight [is] in the law of the LORD; and in his law doth he meditate day and night."

"His delight ... in the law": Switching to a positive description, the spiritually "happy" man is characterized by the consistent contemplation and internalization of God's Word for ethical direction and obedience.

The law of the Lord here, means the Word of God (the Bible). To meditate is to think strongly on the matter. We find then, that we are not only to read the Bible, but to think strongly about what it is saying to us. We are to ever keep the teachings of the Bible before us. When we think upon God's Word, the Holy Spirit will teach us of the hidden things of the Word. The more we meditate, the more we know. We will never be able to learn it all, but we can learn more each time we study and think on God's Word. When it says day and night, it is speaking of taking God's Word with us wherever we go. Our waking thoughts are all guided by God's Word. Even in business transactions, we should make our decisions based on God's Word.

Psalm 1:3 "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."

"Like a tree": Because of the mostly arid terrain of Israel, a lush tree served as a fitting symbol of blessing in the Old Testament. "Planted": Literally "transplanted". Trees do not plant themselves; neither do sinful people transport themselves into God's kingdom. Salvation is His marvelous work of grace (compare Isa. 61:3; Matt. 15:13). Yet, there is genuine responsibility in appropriating the abundant resources of God (compare Jer. 17:8), which lead to eventual productivity.

The image here is of a "tree" nourished by the constant supply of water from the river. The Hebrew word suggests the attributes of strength, stability, and endurance. Supplies of grace

drawn from the Word of God are what sustain godly people. They put down roots in scripture and draw strength from it for their lives (Jer. 17:8). Those who are deeply “planted” in God’s Word may not be wealthy, but they will be fruitful in God’s work, which is true prosperity (92:12-14).

A tree planted by water would be a very strong tree. For a tree to be planted, would indicate that it was not a wild tree. It would be nourished by the water. Water in the Scriptures many times means the Word. We see an example of that in the following Scripture.

Ephesians 5:26 "That he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word,"

Then what this is saying to us, is that if we read and think on the Word of God, we shall be made very strong. This nourishment of the Word of God will make this Christian very strong in the spirit, and will make him or her to be fruit bearers. Christianity is contagious, if you have a good dose yourself, you will give it to others around you as well. You will become a fruit producer.

Matthew 13:23 "But he that received seed into the good ground is he that heareth the word, and understandeth [it]; which also beareth fruit, and bringeth forth, some a hundredfold, some sixty, some thirty."

We see in the Scripture above, the leaf that shall not wither. This means that it is evergreen. The evergreen symbolizes everlasting life. This person has everlasting life. The prosperity mentioned above is in the soul.

3 John 1:2 "Beloved, I wish above all things that thou mayest prosper and be in health, even as thy soul prospereth."

Some people cannot handle great wealth. If a person who cannot handle wealth, becomes rich in this world's goods, they might lose their soul. The best policy is in this next Scripture.

Matthew 6:33 "But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you."

The closest walk that most of us have with God, is in the real trials of life. We realize that we are not able to handle a problem on our own, and we reach out to God. If riches would cause me to wander away from God, I do not want riches.

Psalm 1:4 "The ungodly [are] not so: but [are] like the chaff which the wind driveth away."

“The ungodly are not so”: This is an abrupt contrast, literally “Not so the wicked!”

“Chaff”: A frequent Old Testament word picture from harvest time for what is unsubstantial, without value, and worthy only to be discarded.

We know that the chaff grows with the wheat until harvest time. The chaff is destroyed, and the wheat is carried into the barn. The ungodly live around the godly in this world, but at harvest

time there is a separation. The ungodly, like the chaff, are destroyed at harvest time. The ungodly are of no use, just as the chaff is thrown away at harvest.

Psalm 1:5 "Therefore the ungodly shall not stand in the judgment, nor sinners in the congregation of the righteous."

To “stand in the judgment” of God is a desired outcome here, a symbol of divine approval. “Congregation of the righteous” refers to God’s people, those whose faith is reflected by their delight in God’s Word (1:2), and who live according to it. In the day of judgment, the wicked will not be left standing with those who love God and strive to obey Him; they will be separated and sentenced to eternal punishment.

“Therefore ... not stand”: “Therefore” introduces the strong conclusion that the ungodly will not be approved by God’s judgment.

At harvest time, we shall all appear at the judgement seat of Christ. The ungodly shall be cast into the lake of fire and the believers in Christ shall reign with Him. How wonderful to stand before Jesus and hear Him say: “Well done thy good and faithful servant”. How terrible for the ungodly who will hear Him say, Get away from me, I never knew you. We stand or fall by the judgement of Jesus. The ungodly will fall at this judgement. Heaven is for the believers in Christ. There will be no ungodly in heaven.

Psalm 1:6 "For the LORD knoweth the way of the righteous: but the way of the ungodly shall perish."

“The Lord knoweth”: This is far more than recognition; the Lord “knows” everything. In this context, the reference is to personal intimacy and involvement with His righteous ones (Matt. 7:23; 2 Tim. 2:19).

“The way of”: The repetition of this phrase picks up on the “path” imagery so characteristic of this psalm. It refers to one’s total course of life, i.e., lifestyle. Here these two courses arrive at the ways of life and death (as in Deut. 30:19; Jer. 21:8; Matt. 7:13-14).

The righteous carves his name upon the rock, but the wicked writes his remembrance in the wind. The righteous man plows furrows of earth and sows, and has a harvest here, which shall never be fully reaped until he enters the enjoyments of eternity. But as for the wicked, he plows the sea, and though there may seem to be a shining trail behind his keel, yet the waves shall pass over it, and the place that knew him shall know him no more forever” (Charles Spurgeon).

“Shall perish”: One day the wicked person’s way will end in ruin; a new order is coming and it will be a righteous order. So, Psalm 1 begins with the “blessed” and ends with those who “perish” (compare Psalms 9:5-6; 112:10).

There is the broad way which leads to destruction, but there is also the narrow way of righteousness which leads to eternal life in Christ. The righteous have their names written in the Lamb's book of life. We, by our own free will, choose eternal life or death. The way we choose

to follow on this earth determines the outcome. The righteous are made righteous in the sight of God, when we accept Jesus Christ as our Lord and Savior. Our own righteousness was as filthy rags, until we washed in the blood of the Lamb and took on His righteousness. God knows even the thoughts of your heart. God knew from the foundation of the earth. He did not, foreordain, but foreknew.

Psalm 1 Questions

1. Who wrote most of the Psalms?
2. Name 3 others who wrote at least one Psalm.
3. Who does the author believe that some of the Psalms, not attributed to a specific penman, were written by?
4. What is the longest chapter in the Bible?
5. How many verses does it contain?
6. Many of the Psalms are giving instructions for the proper way to do what?
7. How many quotes from Psalms are there in the New Testament?
8. What things cause the book of Psalms to be known as a prophetic book?
9. Who used the book of Psalms in their worship services?
10. What is the most popular Psalm?
11. Blessed is the man that walketh not in the counsel of the _____.
12. Nor standeth in the way of _____.
13. Nor sitteth in the seat of the _____.
14. What is blessed, in verse one, really speaking of?
15. What does the statement, (the man) indicate to us?
16. What does Galatians chapter 2 verse 20 tell us about the Christian walk?
17. What does walketh mean?
18. Who can these scornful be?
19. What does 2 Corinthians 6:14 tell us about fellowship?

20. What is the law of the Lord?
21. What does meditate mean?
22. What does the statement (day and night), mean here?
23. The person who delights in the Lord is compared to what in verse 3?
24. What nourishes the tree?
25. What does the water symbolize?
26. If we read the Bible and think on the Word, what will happen to us?
27. What is the fruit spoken of in verse 3?
28. What is meant by the leaf not withering?
29. What type of prosperity is verse 3 speaking of?
30. What are the ungodly like in verse 4?
31. Who will not stand in the judgement?
32. What do the Christians hope to hear the Lord Jesus say, when we stand before Him?
33. Who knows the ways of the righteous?
34. What will happen to the ungodly?