

Wisdom Psalms

(Psalms 1, 37, 112, and 127)

Psalm 1

1 Blessed is the man
 who does not walk in the counsel of the wicked
 or stand in the way of sinners
 or sit in the seat of mockers
 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
 which yields its fruit in season
 and whose leaf does not wither.
 Whatever he does prospers.
 4 Not so the wicked!
 They are like chaff that the wind blows away.
 5 Therefore the wicked will not stand in the judgment
 nor sinners in the assembly of the righteous.
 6 For the Lord watches over the way of the righteous
 but the way of the wicked will perish.



1. THE IMPORTANCE OF THE PSALM

- Chosen to be the first in its collection (1-41) and in the whole collection of 150 songs.
- Belongs to the wisdom literature of the Bible, which includes Job, a few of the Psalms, Proverbs, and Ecclesiastes.
- Authorship of Psalm 1 is unknown (suggested authors include Solomon (see Psalm 127) or Jeremiah (see Jeremiah 17:5-8).

2. VERSE BY VERSE

- Vs. 1: The Psalmist looks at the blessedness of the godly person from a negative perspective – what he or she does not do.
 - *“Blessed”* = fulfilled; graced; under God’s watchful care; prosperous
 - Notice the progression of more and more comfort with the ungodly: *“walk, stand, and sit.”* This is progressive staircase parallelism in Hebrew poetry, a progression of thought that completes the picture. The progression here is doubled by the words, *“counsel, way, and seat.”* Both progressions reveal the danger of the company we keep and a warning against our thought, then our behavior, and finally our identity (to whom we belong) being taken up with the ungodly of our culture.
 - *“Counsel”* = advice (Proverbs 15:22), here the advice of the wicked
 - *“Way”* = lifestyle (Deut. 30:16; vs. 6; Psalm 25:12; John 14:6; Act 9:2; 19:9, 23; 22:4)
 - *“Seat”* = place of teaching and learning/community

- Vs. 2: Having shown what the godly person does not do, the Psalm turns positive. What the godly person avoids from the wicked, they acquire from the Word of God.
 - *"Delight"* = find pleasure in
 - *"Law"* (Hebrew, Torah) = the first five Books of Moses, all of God's revealed Scripture
 - *"Meditate"* = to mutter or to whisper aloud (Joshua 1:8; Isaiah 38:14)
 - *"day and night"* – regularity, discipline, framing the day

- Vs. 3: Now the Psalmist plants an image in our mind (a simile ["A" is like "B"] from nature). The image is a tree thriving next to a flowing stream. *"Like a tree"*: Growing trees are signs of flowing water.
 - *"Planted by streams of water"*: Just as the life of a tree depends on its supply of water, the life of the godly person depends on the supply of God's Word (Matthew 4:4). On water as a symbol for life and being right with God, see Psalm 46:4; Isaiah 66:12; Revelation 22:1-2.
 - *"Which yields its fruit in season"*: Pushing the image, this may imply that God watches over us to the extent of our bearing fruit (being productive) just at the right time, our time.
 - *"Whose leaf does not wither"*: This carries the idea of gradual decay.
 - *"Prosper"*: The prosperity here is that the tree fulfills its purpose – it yields fruit. Each tree has its distinctive fruit it is meant to produce. That's its prosperity. (Ephesians 2:10)

- Vs. 4: The psalm's second stanza contrasts the godly with the ungodly (antithetical parallelism in Hebrew poetry – three stanzas in opposition to the first three stanzas).
 - *"They are like chaff which the wind blows away"*: Chaff blown in the wind provides a direct contrast to the thriving tree. Here are the differences: 1) The tree has life; chaff does not. 2) The tree is valuable; chaff is waste, residue, even a nuisance. 3) The tree and chaff differ in destiny, the one lives, the other is "gone with the wind" or thrown into the fire.

- Vs. 5: Echoing the language of vs. 1, the wicked are seen as "not standing" among the godly.
 - *"Will not stand in the judgment...in the assembly of the righteous"* = separation, removal of open, willful sinners; they will "have no place." See Numbers 16:24, 33; 1 Corinthians 5:1-5, 9-11. This is true ultimately as well (2 Thess. 1:6-10; Rev 20:11-15).

- Vs. 6: The last verse summarizes the psalm with an emphasis on the two ways and their future. The destiny of the lifestyle is also the destiny of the one who chooses that lifestyle.
 - Notice that the LORD watches over *"the way"* of the righteous. Those who choose the way of the LORD have His protection, provision, and promise.
 - To the contrary, the wicked (those who choose the other way) are on a course to death (John 3:14-18).

LIVING THE PSALMS

1. The road to hell often follows a subtle, gradual slope.
2. Christians watch the company they keep, and so does God.
3. Prosperous Christians are those who have come to their season for achieving God's purposes for their lives.
4. A Christian fellowship is often threatened by evil from within.
5. Before everyone is a choice with immediate and eternal consequences: the way of the LORD or the way of the wicked.
6. Christianity is not just a faith system, but a way of life.