

Psalm 1: The Two Ways

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Introduction to the Psalms

“The Church has found nothing better to put on the lips of the worshipper than the Psalms.” – Medieval commentator

- The Psalms show us how to pray and praise the Word of God into our lives.
- The Psalms are songs that invite us to sing our experience into them.
- We don't know who wrote it, but Psalm 1 is a wisdom psalm that introduces the rest.

A	¹ Blessed is the man	
A	who does not walk in the counsel of the wicked	
A	or stand in the way of sinners	
A	or sit in the seat of mockers.	
A	² But his delight is in the law of the Lord,	The Way
A	and on his law he meditates day and night.	of the
B	³ He is <u>like</u> a tree planted by streams of water,	righteous
B	which yields its fruit in season	
B	and whose leaf does not wither.	
C	Whatever he does prospers.	
C'	⁴ Not so the wicked!	
B'	They are <u>like</u> chaff	The Way
B'	that the wind blows away.	of the
A'	⁵ Therefore the wicked will not stand in the judgment,	wicked
A'	nor sinners in the assembly of the righteous.	
S	⁶ For the Lord watches over the way of the righteous,	Summary
S'	but the way of the wicked will perish.	

1.1: The Way of the righteous

“Blessed’ means more than just “happy”: “Happy are the sad!?” (Matt 5.4)

- Blessing is the opposite of cursing:
- flourishing like a well-watered tree vs. fading like wind-blown chaff (1.3-4)
- Blessed is the “man” doesn’t only refer to males.
- v. 1 tells us what the blessed person doesn’t do and v. 2-3 tells us what he does do.

1.1: The Way of the righteous

The blessed person does not walk/stand/sit in the influence of the wicked/sinner/scoffer.

- Note the mutually interpretive parallelism.
- The ‘way’ (see same word is 1.6) means habit or lifestyle and refers to the ‘counsel’ you walk in or the ‘seat’ you proclaim from (cf. Matt 23.2).
- Note the communal aspect of all three.
- E.g. TV, movies, internet,

1.2: The Way of the righteous

The ‘but’ at the beginning of 1.2 indicates a contrast.

- The influence of ‘the law of the Lord’ (Torah) is contrasted with the influence of the wicked.
- Note the inside-out progression: delights/meditates (1.2) → does(1.3).
- Whatever you delight in with your **heart** and think on with your **head** you will eventually act on with your **hands**.

1.2: The Way of the righteous

Delighting in Torah (heart) leads to meditating on it (head):

- 'day and night' → memorize it (Ps 119.148)
 - think about it (ruminate like sheep)
 - murmur it (speak to self): word study...
 - pray it (speak to God)
 - discuss it (speak to others): 'assembly' in 1.5
- Whereas Eastern meditation seeks to empty, Biblical meditation seeks to fill.

1.3: The Way of the righteous

Meditating (head) leads to doing (hands):

- The blessed person is likened to a well-watered tree.
- Just like 'delights/meditates', the roots of the tree are unseen.
- Source: 'law of the Lord' = 'streams of water'.
- 'Whatever he does' is not superficial success.
- Even out of season he is evergreen.
- Tree aren't 'planted' by themselves! (Is 61.3)

1.3: The Way of the righteous

Charles Spurgeon said regarding John Bunyan: "If you cut him, he's bleed Scripture!"

- He memorized Scripture and meditated on it in prison.
- He wrote The Pilgrim's Progress, which sold more than any modern book.
- Read quote

1.4-5 The Way of the wicked

'the wicked are like chaff that the wind blows away...'



1.4-5 The Way of the wicked

Whereas the righteous prospers, the wicked does not.

- Chaff is part of the harvest, but is weightless and worthless: winnowing → judgment.
- Trees are rooted, chaff is not.
- 'Therefore the wicked will not stand in the judgment', but will fall (Matt 7.26-27).

The Two Ways Theme

Deut 30.19-20: I call heaven and earth to witness against you today, that I have set before you life and death, blessing and curse. Therefore choose life, that you and your offspring may live, loving the LORD your God, obeying his voice and holding fast to him, for he is your life and length of days...

The Two Ways Theme

Jer 21.8: "And to this people you shall say:
'Thus says the Lord: Behold, I set before you the
way of life and the way of death...'"

The Two Ways Theme

Matt 7.13-14: Enter by the narrow gate. For the
gate is wide and the way is easy that leads to
destruction, and those who enter by it are many.
For the gate is narrow and the way is hard that
leads to life, and those who find it are few.

1.6 Summary of the Two Ways

For
the Lord watches over the way of the righteous,
but
the way of the wicked will perish.

- A contrast in 'chiastic parallelism', from the Greek letter χ (chi).

1.6 Summary of the Two Ways

The "Lord watches over" doesn't merely mean He is aware of or He sees (Ps 146.9).

- preserve vs "perish" (1.6): chiasmic parallelism
- "prosper" vs fail (1.3-4)
- "blessed" vs cursed (1.1)
- Blessing means "the Lord watches over" us (Num 6.22-27)
- God's 'watching over His Word to perform it' (Jer 1.12).

Summary of the Two Ways

The Lord ensures that the way of the righteous flourishes, while the way of the wicked fades.

conclusion

Follow the way of the righteous and you will flourish, but follow the way of the wicked and you will fade.

The counsel of your life determines the course of your life.
