

The Blessed Man
Psalm I
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Blessed is the man
 who walks not in the counsel of the wicked,
 nor stands in the way of sinners,
 nor sits in the seat of scoffers;
 but his delight is in the law of the LORD,
 and on his law he meditates day and night.

He is like a tree
 planted by streams of water
 that yields its fruit in its season,
 and its leaf does not wither.
 In all that he does, he prospers.
 The wicked are not so,
 but are like chaff that the wind drives away.

Therefore, the wicked will not stand in the judgment,
 nor sinners in the congregation of the righteous;
 for the LORD knows the way of the righteous,
 but the way of the wicked will perish. – Psalm I, ESV

Introduction: Why Psalms I & 2?

A good relationship is built around trust, love and clear, effective two-way communication. Our relationship with God is the same. In the Bible, God speaks to us, and in prayer, we speak to God. But effective two-way communication takes time, training, patience and commitment. In our relationship with God, we know what God says to us, but how do we know what He wants us to say to Him?

The issue of knowing how to pray to God has confused and troubled believers for a long time. Jesus' own disciples saw His rich prayer life and asked Him for guidance on how to pray. In response, Jesus taught them the Lord's Prayer, which is a brilliant model for how to structure our prayer lives.

There is also evidence from the life of Jesus that He used the Psalms as a model and guide for His own prayers and life. Twice on the cross, Jesus quoted from the Psalms, when He said, "My God, my God why have you forsaken me," He was quoting Psalm 22:1. Later, when he said, "Into Your hands I commit My Spirit," He drew this from Psalm 31:5.

Even more remarkably, when Jesus began His public teaching ministry in Matthew 5, he began with the same word that begins the Psalms, "Blessed." Jesus' teaching in the Gospels begins with the Beatitudes, and Psalm I is a Beatitude Psalm.

So, the Psalms as a whole are valuable to us for two main reasons:

1. **They give us language to shape our prayer lives in every season of life.** The Psalms are unique in the Bible in that this book is dedicated to our communication to God, rather than to His communication to us. In the rest of Scripture, we primarily have a record of how God speaks to us, but here God the Holy Spirit has inspired words to equip us to pray back to Him. But not all of the Psalms are prayers, which leads to the second major value we draw from the Psalms . . .
2. **They show us the heart of Jesus.** Jesus directly quotes the Psalms at least 11 different times during His earthly ministry. He quotes Psalms 8, 22, 35, 41, 78, 82, 110 & 118. In fact, overall, the Psalms are directly quoted 68 times in the New Testament. This means the Psalms are quoted more often by Jesus and more often in the whole New Testament than any other Old Testament book. As we consider these quotes, we can see that the Psalms show us the heart of Jesus, His prayer life and the significance of His ministry, life, death and resurrection.

Samuel Horsley, an 18th-century English pastor, said, “There is not a page of this Book of Psalms, in which the pious reader will not find his Saviour, if he read with a view of finding Him.”

Matthew Henry took things a step further when he wrote, “In the Book of Psalms there is so much of Christ and His Gospel, as well as of God and His Law, that it has been called the abstract or summary of both Testaments.”

We can see Matthew Henry’s point right away in the first two Psalms, which we will be studying this week and next:

- Psalm 1 is a wisdom psalm, echoing the teachings of the wisdom literature of the Bible, giving us a picture of the Blessed Man, of a life lived according to wisdom. But it is also a summary of the Law of God, showing us how to live a life that fulfills what God requires or expects of us. So, Psalm 1 is a summary and application of the Law and the Wisdom literature.
- Psalm 2, which we’ll examine next week, is a summary of the Prophets, whose main message focuses on the idolatry of the nations as rebellion against God and the establishment of God’s King, the Messiah.
- So, in Psalms 1 & 2, we have a summary of the Law, the Wisdom Literature and the Prophets.
- Further, Psalm 1 can be seen as an exposition of the character of Christ, while Psalm 2 is a declaration of the victory of Christ. In other words, Psalms 1 & 2 show us the Person and Work of Christ.

With that as an introduction, let’s dig into Psalm 1 . . .

A. The Portrait of the Blessed Man (Promise)

“Blessed is the man who . . .” By opening with these words, Psalm 1 is setting itself up to portray for us the life of the blessed man, the character and life of one who receives God’s blessing. This is the same as when Jesus said, “Blessed are the . . .”

I. What He Does and Does Not Do (vv. 1-2)

Blessed is the man

*who walks not in the counsel of the wicked,
nor stands in the way of sinners,
nor sits in the seat of scoffers;
but his delight is in the law of the LORD,
and on his law he meditates day and night.*

In the first two verses, the blessed man is shown to us in terms of what he does and does not do. It is primarily a matter of whose voice he heeds and whose voice he does not heed. There is a negative progression in verse 1: If you walk in the counsel of the wicked – that is, if you live according to the advice of the wicked, you will soon stand in the way of sinners. In other words, if you listen to and follow the advice of rebellious sinners, you will end up standing in their way, living like they live. And then, in the end, you will end up sitting in the seat of scoffers. You will end up settling down and taking your place among the scoffers.

Scoffers are the farthest from God here, farther than the wicked or the sinners. Why? Because they scoff at the truth, they are not only sinning and rebelling against God, but they have closed themselves off to God’s truth.

The opposite of walking in the counsel of the wicked is delighting in the law of the LORD and meditating on His law day and night. Notice that the blessed life is not found in simply resisting and turning away from evil and the counsel of the wicked but also in delighting in God’s law. It is not enough to despise evil and turn a deaf ear to the counsel of the wicked. We must also delight in the Law of God. God gives His Law for our good, for our blessing. To receive that blessing, we must delight ourselves in God’s Law and make it our meditation day and night. We must ponder, “chew on,” recite and contemplate God’s Law over and over again.

2. How He is (and is not) Blessed (vv. 3-4)

He is like a tree

*planted by streams of water
that yields its fruit in its season,
and its leaf does not wither.*

In all that he does, he prospers.

The wicked are not so,

but are like chaff that the wind drives away.

The one who turns aside from the counsel of the wicked and instead delights in and meditates on God's Law is blessed in a particular way. The blessed life of the blessed man is described in verse 3-4. Notice that the blessing is not found in great riches or world-wide fame or incredible power. Rather, it is found in real and fruitful life.

A life that is blessed by God is a real life, a life of vitality and substance, and a life that bears fruit. When God measures the goodness of a life, He looks for fruit. He values fruitfulness, that is the producing of spiritual good in your life. This can be seen in terms of character and impact. A fruitful life is marked by the fruit of the Spirit – love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control. It is also marked by a positive spiritual impact on others, being a vessel of truth, goodness and beauty into the lives of others.

The world may or may not measure or treasure these things, but this is what God seeks and values in His people. The opposite is a life of chaff, of empty, dry, unfruitful nothing. Chaff is devoid of life and is good for nothing but to be used as tinder for fire or to be blown away by the wind.

3. How He Will Stand (vv. 5-6)

The reference to chaff being driven away by the wind is a picture of judgment, which prepares us for verses 5-6:

*Therefore, the wicked will not stand in the judgment,
nor sinners in the congregation of the righteous;
for the LORD knows the way of the righteous,
but the way of the wicked will perish.*

The Bible is very clear that God will judge everyone. Judgment Day is not just the name of a Terminator movie; it is a coming reality for all of us. The wicked will not stand in the judgment, but there will be a "congregation of the righteous" on that, the final in-gathering of the harvest. John the Baptist said about Jesus, "His winnowing fork is in his hand, and he will clear his threshing floor and gather his wheat into the barn, but the chaff he will burn with unquenchable fire."

This final judgment will happen this way because ("for") the Lord knows the way of the righteous. To "know" in this way is to be intimately involved, concerned and committed. It is the knowing of a deep, personal relationship. Verse 6 tells us that either the Lord knows Your way or Your way will perish. In other words, either the Lord in Your Lord and Your God, Your Guide and Your Master, or else your ways are the ways of chaff, and in the end, your way will perish.

Think of a classic car. Of the 199 original Corvette Z06's from 1963, about 97 remained intact, according to the Corvette registry, in 2011. What happened to the other 102? They perished. Why? Because no one looked over them. No one lovingly cared for them. No one preserved them and protected them. That's a small illustration of what verse 6 is saying about people. Either you are righteous and the Lord knows your way – caring for you, protecting you, providing for you, loving you – or else you are wicked and your way will perish.

Now that we understand what Psalm 1 is saying, we have to ask ourselves this question: Does this Psalm describe me? Do I fit God's own definition and description of "the blessed man"? Well, do I always shun the advice of the world? Do I keep myself far from the counsel of the wicked, the way of the sinner, the seat of the scoffer? Do I delight in God's Law, really? Do I meditate on it day and night? Am I flourishing and fruitful?

If we're honest and we know ourselves, we would all have to say that we fall short of this description of "the blessed man." But there was one who didn't.

B. The Perfection of the Blessed Man (Fulfillment)

The perfect embodiment of Psalm 1, the perfectly Blessed Man, is the One whose life perfectly embodied the wisdom of God and the law of God: Jesus Christ.

I. Jesus Taught with Authority and Not as the Scribes (vv. 1--2)

Jesus kept Himself from the counsel of the wicked. This doesn't mean that He never associated with sinners; we know that some of His closest followers and most devoted disciples were notorious sinners – from Mary Magdalene to Matthew the Tax Collector to Zacchaeus. What Jesus did was turn a deaf ear to the "counsel of the wicked." Ironically, the group most ready to offer "the counsel of the wicked" in Jesus' day were the religious leaders, the scribes and Pharisees. There is, in fact, no counsel more wicked than self-serving, self-righteous, self-advancing religion.

When Jesus taught, He based His teaching on God's word, not on the opinions of the scribes and Pharisees. Thus, people responded to His teaching by noting that He taught "with authority" and "not as the scribes."

Jesus also delighted Himself in God's Law and meditated on it day and night. Evidence of this is seen early in Jesus' life when, at twelve years old, He was in the Temple questioning the teachers. Luke 2:47 tells us, "And all who heard him were amazed at his understanding and his answers."

We see evidence of Jesus' delight in and meditation on God's Law again when He is tempted in the wilderness, recorded in Matthew 4 and Luke 4. Jesus responds to Satan's temptations by quoting from the Book of Deuteronomy three times. Deuteronomy is Moses' teaching of the Law to the Israelites, as they were about the cross into the Promised Land. Jesus obviously knew it well, to be able to quote from three different places in it, each perfectly suited to answer Satan's temptation.

So Jesus perfectly embodied the description of the Blessed Man in verses 1-2.

2. Jesus Was Fruitful Though Bruised and Broken (vv. 3-4)

He also perfectly embodied the blessedness described in verses 3-4. Jesus was not wealthy or politically powerful, but He was the most truly alive and vital and fruitful human being who has ever lived. Jesus

embodies what it means to be truly and vitally alive, with the power of life in Himself. He was also the most fruitful human being who has ever lived, both in terms of the fruit of personal character and the fruit of spiritual impact on others.

Jesus was and is the most perfectly loving, joyful, peaceful, patient, kind, good, faithful, gentle and self—controlled person who has ever lived. He has also done more spiritual good for more people, positively impacting more people and more of culture than anyone else who has ever lived – indeed, more than all of the other people who have ever lived!

But Jesus also shows us that fruitfulness and suffering are not opposites, but they are often a paired set. No one was more fruitful than Jesus, but Jesus was also “a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief.” Indeed, it was in being bruised and broken for us and for our salvation that Jesus bore the most spiritual fruit and brought the greatest spiritual benefit to us.

3. Jesus Stands as King and Judge Forever (vv. 5-6)

We see even more of a picture of Jesus in verses 5-6. On Judgment Day, Jesus not only stands in the judgment, but he stands as the Judge of all. Not only is He in the congregation of the righteous, but He is the head of the congregation of the righteous.

C. Our Portion in the Blessed Man (Application)

And so, we can see that Psalm 1 is ultimately not a picture of us but of Christ. But does that mean that it doesn't apply to us at all? No! By God's grace, we are united to Christ by faith, and so we receive all of the benefits and blessings that Christ deserves, as we are in Him.

1. The Holy Spirit Teaches us the Truth of His Word (vv. 1-2)

When we consider the application of verses 1-2 to us, we see that we are given the gift of the Holy Spirit, who lives in us. Jesus said, “*the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, he will teach you all things and bring to your remembrance all that I have said to you.*” (John 14:26)

The Holy Spirit teaches us the truth through the Word of God, helping us to meditate on Scripture and understand and apply God's word to our lives. He also convicts us of sin and keeps us from going astray in the way of the wicked. While we are still tempted to follow the bad advice of the world, the Holy Spirit keeps us, leads us, teaches us, convicts us and reassures us. He is the one who allows us to live, in some measure, the description of verses 1-2 in Christ.

2. The Son in Us Makes Us Fruitful (vv. 3-4)

But it is the righteousness of Christ which the Spirit applies to us, and it is Christ in us who makes us fruitful for God's glory. The Holy Spirit causes us to bear the fruit of the Spirit, as it is called in Galatians 5, but it is really the inner application of the perfect righteousness of Christ. I Corinthians 1:30 says, “*you are in Christ*

Jesus, who became to us wisdom from God, righteousness and sanctification and redemption.” All of the lasting fruit and eternal life which is applied to us comes from Jesus, who is our perfect wisdom, righteousness, sanctification and redemption.

3. The Father Declares Us His Forever (vv. 5-6)

And while the Holy Spirit teaches us the truth and applies to us the righteousness of Christ, and while Christ is our wisdom, righteousness, sanctification and redemption, it is God the Father who has predestined us, adopted us and thus declared us His forever.

In John 10:27-30, Jesus gives us a powerful picture of how Psalm 1 becomes a reality in our lives:

“My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me. I give them eternal life, and they will never perish, and no one will snatch them out of my hand. My Father, who has given them to me, is greater than all, and no one is able to snatch them out of the Father's hand. I and the Father are one.”

All three members of the Trinity, as One Triune God, work together for our salvation and blessing. How do we hear the voice of Jesus? It is through the inner working of the Holy Spirit. We are kept in Jesus' hands and we are kept in the Father's hands and Jesus and the Father (and the Spirit) are One.

Because of the marvelous, powerful redeeming work of God, we can know that we are the righteous of Psalm 1, not with our own righteousness but with the perfect righteousness of Christ.

So, for you, as we close, there is but one question: Are you a blessed person, according to Psalm 1?

In other words, are you loved, favored, protected and declared righteous by God? You can't get there on your own. Your heart is too deceitful and wicked. You can only get there by trusting in Jesus, who alone perfectly embodies the wisdom and righteousness of Psalm 1. By faith, the Holy Spirit will unite you to Jesus and make all of His righteousness and wisdom yours, that all of His blessing and benefit might be yours, too!