



MATT BLACK, Sun, July 15, 2018
livinghopechurch.net

1 | PSALM 1

THE BLESSED LIFE

Outline

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Jim Thorpe

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Announcements

1. Welcome visitors!
2. Register your kids for VBS today, either in the foyer or online. VBS is coming up July 23-27.
3. All VBS staff and volunteers need to stop by the welcome center to have their wanted photo taken.
4. Don't miss tonight's evening service. We will be viewing a Frontline missions video. The service will begin by 5:30pm and end by 6:30pm.

Introduction

Open your Bible if you will to Psalm 1. We are beginning a series called “Shadow of the Almighty.” Our desire is to take ten Psalms for the next ten Sundays or so, and learn how to walk in God’s comforting and powerful presence. We want to look at the first ten Psalms for the rest of the Summer. I hope to take ten Psalms each year.

The Psalms are the Hebrew hymnal. They are divided into five sections – each closing with a doxology). These divisions imitate the five-fold division of the in the books of Moses:

- Book 1 (Psalms 1–41) Genesis, the Blessed Man
- Book 2 (Psalms 42–72) Exodus, Deliverance
- Book 3 (Psalms 73–89) Leviticus, God’s Sanctuary
- Book 4 (Psalms 90–106) Numbers, Wandering in the wilderness
- Book 5 (Psalms 107–150) Deuteronomy, Entering Promised Land

The first Psalm is a powerful trajectory of life. It is likely the preface for the entire Psalter. It presents two pathways, which is foundational for the life of faith in both the Old and New Testaments. How blessed we are that we are not alone. We are chosen out of this world and placed in the shadow of the Almighty. I pray in this series we will learn how to walk with God.

Scripture Reading

Let’s stand and read our passage today, Psalm 1, “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; 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 that yields its fruit in its season, and its leaf does not wither. In all that he does, he prospers.

⁴ The wicked are not so, but are like chaff that the wind drives away. ⁵ Therefore the wicked will not stand in the judgment, nor sinners in the congregation of the righteous; ⁶ for the Lord knows the way of the righteous, but the way of the wicked will perish.”

This is God’s Word.

O How Blessed!

How blessed the redeemed of God are. The word “blessed” in Hebrew is *asher*. It is to be in the most envious state possible. The word “blessed” means to be whole and fully satisfied inwardly no matter what is happening outside. It is to have that peace that passes understanding and the joy that is unspeakable regardless of the ups and downs of life. We might call it **stability** and **contentment**. We all want spiritual stability and contentment. How do we get it? We all want this blessed life.

Jim Thorpe

Jim Thorpe was a gold medal winning Olympian in 1912. You might say Jim Thorpe was “blessed” with amazing athletic skill. Most called him the greatest athlete in the world in his day.

If you look closely at the slide, you can see that he’s wearing different socks and shoes. This wasn’t a fashion statement. It was the 1912 Olympics, and Jim, an American Indian

from Oklahoma represented the U.S. in track and field. On the morning of his competitions, his shoes were stolen. Luckily, Jim ended up finding two shoes in a garbage can. That's the pair that he's wearing in the photo. But one of the shoes was too big, so he had to wear an extra sock. Wearing these shoes, Jim won two gold medals that day.

This is a perfect reminder that you are blessed by God no matter what bad things are happening. So what if life hasn't been fair? What are you going to do about it today? Whatever you woke up with this morning; stolen shoes, ill health, failed relationships, don't let it stop you from running your race for Christ. You can be blessed if you live in the reality of what you do have, not in what you don't have! And what do you have? **All of Christ.** You are blessed in Christ. You have everything you need in Jesus! I want to show you dear saints how you can live the blessed life.

We see it here in Psalm 1. Each of the verses is a couplet. They compare the life of the blessed person and the life of the wicked person. One is a life of **faith** that lasts forever. The other is a life of **folly** that is totally vain and worthless.

The question I have for you this morning is: are you living a life of faith or folly? Are you enjoying the enduring blessing of Jesus or the worthlessness of this world?

1. THE COUNSEL OF THE BLESSED LIFE(1:1-2)

THE BLESSED PERSON DEPARTS FROM THE WICKED

Dear saints, you need to have the courage and perseverance to depart from the wicked. God knows **the way of the wicked will perish** (1:6). That's how this Psalm ends. It begins by saying that the blessed man (a generic word for mankind; it means both men and women) has a very negative outlook about certain things.

There are some things that will mess you up in life. Those who do not know the Lord are **spiritually blind** and are not to be trusted with helping you make life's decisions.

- The Bible says that "the god of this world has blinded the minds of the unbelievers, to keep them from seeing the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God" (2 Cor 4:4).
- "The natural person does not accept the things of the Spirit of God, for they are folly to him, and he is not able to understand them because they are discerned by the Spirit [of God]" (1 Cor 2:14).

We need to have a negative outlook on this world. We are not on vacation. We are in a war. "Be sober-minded; be watchful. Your adversary the devil prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour" (1 Pet 5:8).

Beware of the Progression of the Wicked

Let's look specifically at Psalm 1:1 and see how we are to depart from the wicked: "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" (1:1). Notice the progression. The wicked are not stable. They are sliding farther and farther away from God. Be careful in your own life not to slide into this pattern: first **walking**, then **standing**, and then finally **sitting**.

Satan doesn't just want to slow you down; he wants to take you out of service. Blessed is the man or woman who sees this progression. He wants you to progress in the wrong direction.

The progression of bad counsel (frog in the kettle)

This progression is like the frog in the kettle. Have you heard of the frog in the kettle? In the 19th century, scientists performed many experiments about a "frog in a kettle." They concluded that if a frog is dropped into a kettle of boiling water, it will immediately jump out because of the pain. But if the frog is placed in a kettle with water at room temperature, and if the water is heated very slowly over time, the frog will not feel the heat in time to avoid being boiled to death.¹ Beware of Satan's strategies. He will destroy you with a slow fade. Beware of this progression.

What is it that is leading you away from God? You've got to get away from the counsel of the ungodly and begin to be "renewed in the spirit of your mind" by the Word of God.

The world's counsel is like a hidden snake

Remember Satan disguises himself and "masquerades as an angel of light" (2 Cor 11:14). Satan can use good people in your life to give you bad counsel.

I just read about what is called a "**rock rattlesnake**" that blends in with concrete.² It's from the pit viper species of snake, and it is one of the deadliest snakes on the planet. Its bite is powerful. It's so fast, it can bite before you have a chance to run.

Other than being thankful that I don't live in Texas where this snake breeds, I think we need to understand that Satan is a snake much more dangerous than anything in the physical realm. We need to be on guard and active. How you say?

Be Ready to Progress in Christ (in spite of the Wicked)

You cannot be neutral when it comes to the world. You must take a stand against it. The Gospel sets us free in Christ with joy and righteousness in the Holy Spirit. But that most certainly puts us at odds against the world.

We don't LISTEN to the counsel of the wicked

"Blessed is the man who walks not in the counsel of the wicked..." (1:1a). This means cutting off the means of communication of the world to your heart. For example:

Sinful media. This could be movies with a sinful agenda, ungodly TV, wrong music, etc. Nowadays, you can click on something good online, and it could lead you to something unwholesome. Be careful!

Wrong friends. Someone said show me your friends and I'll show you your future.

Wrong family influences. Just because you are family does not mean you can't have boundaries. You need to have healthy boundaries in your life. You are responsible

¹ Modern scientists have conducted similar experiments and have concluded that the "boiling frog" premise is false. Whether the "frog in the kettle" premise is true or not, it is applicable to the culture, including the Christian culture.

² Mark Price, "A White Rattlesnake" (Charlotte, NC: Charlotte Observer, July 13, 2018), web: <https://www.charlotteobserver.com/news/local/article214825735.html>, accessed 13 July 2018.

for your own way of thinking. Satan at times will use family to draw your thinking away from Christ.

Bad habits. Sometimes we stay out late and come into church late. You need to cut off whatever is causing you to get bad counsel or not get good counsel.

Your own heart can be a source of bad counsel. Don't listen to your heart. "The human heart is the most deceitful of all things, and desperately wicked. Who really knows how bad it is?" (Jer 17:9, NLT).

The Bible says in **Ephesians 4:22-24**, "Put off your old self, which belongs to your former manner of life and is corrupt through deceitful desires,²³ and to be renewed in the spirit of your minds,²⁴ and to put on the new self, created after the likeness of God in true righteousness and holiness."

Psalm 101:3 "I will not set before my eyes anything that is worthless. I hate the work of those who fall away; it shall not cling to me." The word "worthless" in Hebrew is Belial. It is also the word for evil, unprofitable, or ungodly.³ Any word or work of Satan. I don't want it in my life. The world wants these things to cling to you. Say it this morning. "It shall not cling to me."

*We **LEAVE** the way of sinners*

"Blessed is the man who walks not in the counsel of the wicked, nor stands in the way of sinners..." (1:1b). This means you will probably lose friends, and sometimes even your own family may reject you, but Jesus promised to give you a hundred fold in this life and in the life to come.

This doesn't mean you never associate with lost people – of course you do. Jesus was a "friend of tax collectors and sinners" – the very worst of society (**Mt 11:19**). Even though the Pharisees accused Jesus of participating in the lifestyle of sinners, he never did. Jesus is "able to sympathize" with sinners because he's been "tested in every way like us." But there is one difference. He was "without sin" (Heb 4:15).

I remember when I came to know Christ I stopped living the way my friends lived. That does not mean I broke off all contact with sinners. But I started leaving the paths of sin so that my friends didn't find my friendship that appealing anymore.

I didn't stop hanging out with sinners. In order to do that I would have to leave this earth and go to heaven! No I cannot participate in the world's way of life. As believers, we cannot participate in any kind of sin no matter how small we think it is, or else we will break our fellowship with God! We don't make a practice of sinning.

Turn your Bible over to 1 John 3:9. Don't miss this. John says: "No one born of God makes a practice of sinning, for God's seed abides in him; and he cannot keep on sinning, because he has been born of God" (1 Jn 3:9).

This doesn't mean Christians never sin, but that by nature, we are spiritually allergic to sin. We cannot be comfortable with sin. We leave the pathway of sin. We do not stand, practicing the lifestyle of sinners.

*We must not **LAUGH** in the seat of the scornful*

Sin is a serious subject. The wicked laugh, but the godly cry. "Blessed is the man who walks not in the counsel of the wicked, nor stands in the way of sinners, nor sits

³ James Strong, *Enhanced Strong's Lexicon* (Woodside Bible Fellowship, 1995).

in the seat of scoffers” (1:1). Those who follow Christ have broken hearts for sin. We hate our sin. We say “O wretched man that I am...who shall deliver me?” It’s Jesus. Jesus will deliver me! By his blood stained Cross I will live!

Sin is no laughing matter. You can tell the difference between the saved and the lost. The world laughs at sin.

Notice the saved man or woman does not “sit” in the seat of the scorner, laughing at sin. There is a sense of permanence here for the lost person. Satan wants to complete the progression. He’ll get you to walk in bad counsel, stand in a sinful way of life, and finally **sit in the seat of scoffers**, laughing with the world at sin.

Now that we are saved, we don’t laugh at sin. We hate the awful condition of those that do not know Christ. We no longer sit where they sit. We were dead in trespasses and sins, but now we have been raised with Christ (Eph 2:1-5). Now we seek to live that resurrected life and point the lost to Christ!

THE BLESSED PERSON DELIGHTS IN THE WORD

Precious saint, you are loved by God. We often know we need to get away from bad counsel, but how do we get good counsel? We learn in Psalm 1. “But his delight is in the law of the Lord, and on his law he meditates day and night” (1:2).

Simple right? The Bible calls us to renewal of our mind. That’s the way to be transformed. Now understand, meditation is not just about intellectual learning, but about accepting God’s Word from your heart. Someone said the difference between heaven and hell is just 18 inches (between your head and your heart).

*God’s Word must be our **passion***

We move from the negative in verse 1 to the positive. Delighting in the Word and meditating on the Word go together. Whatever we enjoy, we think about and pursue. “Meditate” in the Hebrew means “to mutter, to read in an undertone, to ponder over and over.”⁴

“I have treasured the words of his mouth more than my necessary food” (**Job 23:12**).

Do you love God’s Word and believe it with all your heart? What we delight in is our passion. There are those who more than anything love sports, or love music, or something else. It doesn’t matter what it is. Above everything else, our first love should be the Lord. Our life should revolve around him. Paul said in **Philippians 3:10**, “That I may know him, and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings, being made conformable unto his death.”

If you want to know God and walk in the shadow of the Almighty, you’ve got to get to know him in his word.

*God’s Word must be our **point of focus***

The world knows this principle. That is why the internet, the television, the radio, and the newspaper are so interesting. The world wants you to concentrate on it. But the Bible says right here that we should “meditate on the law of the Lord day and night.” Every

⁴ Herbert Wolf, “467 מַדַּבֵּר,” ed. R. Laird Harris, Gleason L. Archer Jr., and Bruce K. Waltke, *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1999), 205.

time we turn around the world wants our attention. Just go down the road and you will see a billboard! May the word of God be our billboard constantly before us.

The most important thing about God's Word is it points us to Christ. Beloved theologian Bruce Waltke said, "Whoever delights in the Word of Scripture will delight in the *Logos* ("Word") of God, Jesus Christ, who fulfills Scripture and to whom it points."⁵

I want to encourage you brothers and sisters: meditate on God's Word. If you meditate on it, you will memorize it. A good way to read God's Word is to take a passage and find a verse that God has for you. The Holy Spirit's conviction is on the verse. You write that down or underline it. Take a picture of it with your phone. Look at it throughout the day. God will speak to you.

The Contrast: the Word or the World?

Do you see the contrast? Where is **your counsel**? Are you following the **Word** or the **World**? Are you renewing your mind constantly by the **Word**? Are you washing yourself and your family in the water of the Word? Is your life and character changing because of the Word?

Or are you **slowly progressing** to a vain life: walking, standing sitting? What pathway are you on? The Word or the world? What you follow determines the fruit and destiny of your life.

2. THE FRUIT OF THE BLESSED LIFE (1:3-4)

We see a great contrast here again in verses 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. ⁴The wicked are not so, but are like **chaff** that the wind drives away" (1:3-4).

Here we find a tree, perhaps like is common in Israel, a great palm tree. When we think of trees here we think of oak trees. But oak trees cannot survive in a desert. This is a tree whose roots go down deep to the water source, planted by streams of water.

The contrast is striking. The wicked are not so but are like chaff. The righteous are like valuable, useful, fruitful trees. But the wicked *are like the chaff which the wind drives away*, the very lightest and worthless leftovers, the dust which the owner of the floor desires to have driven away, as not capable of being put to any use.⁶

THE BLESSED PERSON IS LIKE A FRUITFUL TREE

We see a great contrast here again in verses 3-4. So hear it again: The blessed man "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" (1:3).

⁵ Bruce K. Waltke, James M. Houston, and Erika Moore, *The Psalms as Christian Worship: A Historical Commentary* (Grand Rapids, MI; Cambridge, U.K.: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2010), 136.

⁶ Matthew Henry, *Matthew Henry's Commentary on the Whole Bible: Complete and Unabridged in One Volume* (Peabody: Hendrickson, 1994), 744.

We are Planted

The blessed man “is like a **tree planted** by streams of water...” (1:3a). This is God's work. You did not save yourself. We are saved by grace, not works! And since God planted us is his will, we can never be removed from the presence of God. Like a gardener planting a tree, so God planted us in Christ. I did not choose him. “We love him because he first loved us” (1 Jn 4:19). He “has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places, ⁴ even as he chose us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and blameless before him” (Eph 1:3-4).

Like a tree we are planted in Christ. Aren't you glad he chose you and planted you? All God requires of you is simple faith – childlike surrender to him.

God chose Abraham (Gen 12, 15). “Abraham believed God, and it was counted to him for righteousness” (Gen 15:6). Here was this pagan. He hadn't lifted one finger for the true and living God. Yet God chose him, and all he had to do was believe. And here's a mystery: even his faith was a gift. Remember what God told him upon Abraham's profession of faith in Genesis 12? “I will make of you a great nation, and I will bless you and make your name great, so that you will be a blessing. ³ I will bless those who bless you, and him who dishonors you I will curse, and in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed” (Gen 12:2-3). Abraham did nothing to deserve this. He was planted.

We see the contrast, the one who follows the Lord is like a well-rooted **tree**. It's a picture of **permanence**. But the one who follows his or her own way is like the **chaff** that can **never last**. It's worthless. Anyone who lives for self or this world is living an absolutely vain life. Nothing will come of it, and in the end you will perish.

The most common trees in Israel are palm trees. **Psalm 92:12-14**, “The righteous flourish like the **palm tree** and grow like a cedar in Lebanon. ¹³ They are planted in the house of the Lord; they flourish in the courts of our God. ¹⁴ They still bear fruit in old age; they are ever full of sap and green...”

Like Trees We are Protected

The Palm trees common to Israel are quite amazing trees. For starters, you can cut it, but you cannot kill it. The palm tree has a deep middle that sustains it's nutrients. The nutrients that most trees need to survive are found just below the bark, so when you cut them, they die, but not the palm tree. Its life comes from the deep middle of the tree, so it thrives even under attack.

No matter what you are going through, it's all working out for your good, to conform you to Christ (Rom 8:28-29). You are going to get hit and cut in the trials of life, but it cannot hurt you. You are protected by Christ!

Palm Trees Survive the Dry Times

Palm trees not only thrive in the tropics, they can also thrive in the desert, where very little thrives. You may be living in a spiritual desert—maybe in your family, maybe in your work place, people don't seem to have a hunger for the things of God. If you are in Christ, you will survive those dry times. When you think about it, this whole world—apart from Christ—is a desert. But God can give His children the grace, the ability, to flourish—to

grow, to be strong, to be fruitful, to be beautiful, even in a desert place. God makes “rivers in the desert” (Isa 43:19).

Palm Trees Have an Amazing Root System

If you took a cross section of a palm tree, you would find a number of brownish spots instead of the growth rings like you'd find in most trees. These are bundles of vascular strands that carry nutrients up and down the tree. It's like a thick steel cable-woven from a lot of smaller steel wires that go all the way down to the roots. Each strand in these vascular bundles is connected to the root system.

Other trees have woody roots, and in most trees, 80 percent of the root system is within the top two feet of soil. But not so with the palm tree. Anyone who has ever tried to dig up a palm can tell you it has fibrous roots that not only fan out to great distances but also go down deep. A palm tree's roots sometimes go down around the tectonic plates.

We are planted in Christ. As we keep our roots connected to Jesus, as we abide in him, as we let him abide in us, we will produce much fruit for his glory. The Bible tells us in so many places that we need to be rooted in our Lord. Jesus said, “I am the vine; you are the branches. Whoever abides in me and I in him, he it is that bears much fruit, for apart from me you can do nothing” (Jn 15:5).

Palm Trees Bend But Do Not Break

We are planted in Christ, and like the palm tree, we bend but do not break. Hurricanes can blow most trees away, but not the palm tree. It can bend almost all the way to the ground, and when the storm is over, it straightens up again and is actually stronger. The root system of the palm tree combines to give a palm tree a very solid base in the ground and a very supple trunk that will bend in the wind without breaking.

How about you, did you know that it's trials that make us strong and help our faith to grow? So... “Count it all joy, my brothers, when you meet trials of various kinds, for you know that the testing of your faith produces steadfastness. And let steadfastness have its full effect, that you may be [spiritually] mature and complete, lacking in nothing” (Jas 1:3-4). We are planted!

We are Productive

The blessed man “is like a tree planted by streams of water that yields its fruit in its season, and its leaf does not wither...” (1:3b).

When you enter God's presence, you do not leave empty handed. When God comes into your life you cannot be the same person. You are new in Christ. We cannot do it. We must let God produce the fruit in our lives through prayer and Bible study. You are a “new creation” in Christ (2 Cor 5:17). There is lasting fruit that comes out of your life.

No matter how small or insignificant you think you are, God will use you to advance his kingdom if you yield your life to him. He will use you. I remember reading of Hudson Taylor when he was a young man.

Illustration: We think of men like **Hudson Taylor**, and see 50 million Christians today in China. But you see it was not him who was productive, it was God. You see, Taylor said, “The sun has not risen all the years I have been in China, without me being on my knees in prayer.” Oh that we could say that and be productive in the presence of

God! We can do anything if we just call on God. We can move mountains. It's all God. It's nothing for God to move a mountain.

And when God does something, it lasts. "Its leaf does not wither" (1:3). When you and I are long gone, the Lord will use the meager things he has done for generations.

What do you need? "My God will supply every need of yours according to his riches in glory in Christ Jesus" (**Phil 4:19**).

We are Prosperous

The blessed man "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" (1:3c).

What ever you do for Christ, it will endure forever! We won't remember so much of this world's best efforts in music, sports, theater. But I tell you whatever you do for Christ will prosper and endure for ever. Whatever you do. No matter how small, how insignificant it seems to you. God says in all that the blessed man does for Christ, "he prospers."

THE WICKED PERSON IS LIKE WORTHLESS CHAFF

We see a great contrast here again in verse 4. The lost person's activities and endeavors and thoughts are all like worthless chaff. "The wicked are not so, but are like chaff that the wind drives away" (1:4). Those who live for themselves (the wicked) are nothing like true believers. "Not so the wicked!" says the Psalmist. The godly are compared to a tree—strong, permanent, beautiful, useful, fruitful. The ungodly are compared to chaff—they have no roots; they are blown with the wind; they are useless to the plans of God; they are neither beautiful nor fruitful.⁷

In contrast to the righteous, who are like trees, the ungodly are dead, rootless, blown about, and destined for the fire. Chaff is worth nothing. When the grain is winnowed, the wind blows the chaff away, and what chaff remains is thrown into the fire.⁸

The righteous are like the palm trees. They're legacy is enduring and permanent, but the wicked vanish like worthless chaff. Nobody remembers them. They vanish.

3. THE DESTINY OF THE BLESSED LIFE (1:5-6)

How one lives and where one takes a stand has life-shaping consequences. The final set of comparisons sets out the contrasting ways and consequent result of the lives of the righteous and the wicked.⁹

A CONTRAST OF CONGREGATIONS (1:5)

"Therefore the wicked will not stand in the judgment, nor sinners in the congregation of the righteous" (1:5).

⁷ Wiersbe, W. W. (1993). *Wiersbe's Expository Outlines on the Old Testament* (Ps 1:4–6). Wheaton, IL: Victor Books.

⁸ Warren W. Wiersbe, *Be Worshipful*, 1st ed., "Be" Commentary Series (Colorado Springs, CO: Cook Communications Ministries, 2004), 15.

⁹ Gerald H. Wilson, *Psalms*, vol. 1, The NIV Application Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2002), 98.

The Psalm began with the fact that the righteous do not keep company with the wicked. We are all sinners, but we don't participate in the sinful thinking and life style of the lost in the world.

There is some debate about what it means for "the wicked" to "not stand in the judgment." Though it is true the "sheep and the goats" will be divided on the final day of judgment, that is probably not what this is talking about. Instead we see the parallelism. It's more likely talking about the **judgment** and **counsel** of the **congregation** of the righteous. Those who don't know the Lord will not stand for the Bible's teaching. They don't want the judgment (or counsel) of God's Word proclaimed in the congregation of the righteous.

Any local community has an "assembly of the faithful," a meeting of its elders that is charged with resolving matters of conflict in the community, with making a judgment or a **decision** about things that happen.¹⁰ The lost world doesn't want to be accountable to each other like the righteous.

"Therefore the wicked will not stand in the judgment, nor sinners in the congregation of the righteous" (1:5).

The parallel of 1:5a is that "sinners" will not stand "in the congregation of the righteous" (1:5b). That's a pretty radical statement. You can tell a lost person because they don't want to stay too long where God's people are congregating and speaking or singing or praying about God's Word. Sinners don't like to be in the congregation of the righteous.

A CONTRAST OF DESTINIES (1:6)

"For the Lord knows the way of the righteous, but the way of the wicked will perish" (1:6).

The Psalm ends with our final destiny. This indeed is referring to eternity. Show me your friends, and I will show you your future. Do you walk with God in the counsel of his Word? Do you obey and apply the Word of God? Does his Word lead you to a deeper and more enriching walk with God?

Isn't God good to warn us? The Psalm begins with a statement of blessing: "Blessed is the man..." (1:1a), and it ends with a warning of perishing: "for the Lord knows the way of the righteous, but the way of the wicked will perish" (1:6).

God Watches Over the Righteous

"The Lord knows the way of the righteous" (1:6a). The word "know" could be translated "watches over" (as in the NIV). God's Spirit actively "knows," "resonates with," and is intimately acquainted with the character and conduct of the righteous.¹¹ He watches over us and interacts with every detail of our lives. This is beautifully stated in **Psalm 37:23-24** (NKJV), "The steps of a good man are ordered by the Lord, And He delights in his way. ²⁴ Though he fall, he shall not be utterly cast down; For the Lord upholds him with His hand."

¹⁰ John Goldingay, *Psalms for Everyone, Part 1: Psalms 1-72*, Old Testament for Everyone (Louisville, KY; London: Westminster John Knox Press; Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, 2013), 8-9.

¹¹ Bruce K. Waltke, James M. Houston, and Erika Moore, *The Psalms as Christian Worship: A Historical Commentary* (Grand Rapids, MI; Cambridge, U.K.: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2010), 142.

Troubled saint, God is watching over you. He is carrying you. Just rest in him. He is watching over you and knows everything about you. He's working it out according to his plan. Trust him.

Every difficulty you've had or will have has a purpose. He's bringing you home saint. He will wipe away every tear. He will turn all your misery to mercy and miracles. He's fulfilling his purposes in you. He's watching over you. He is our "good shepherd" (Psa 23). Surely "goodness" and "mercy" or his unrelenting love "shall follow me all the days of my life and I shall dwell in the house of the Lord forever" (Psa 23:6). God cares for and watches over the godly. But not the wicked.

God Abandons the Wicked

The wicked are like a person in a car with a drunk driver. It does not end well. "But the way of the wicked will perish" (1:6b). The word "perish" means "to run away" to their own destruction.¹² Indeed, God "not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance" (**2 Pet 3:9**). God says in **Ezekiel 33:11**, "I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but that the wicked turn from his way and live."

God abandons the wicked to their own way which leads to self-destruction. Woe to the those who do not trust in our Lord Jesus Christ. They will perish. This is merciful warning. If there is a bridge that is out, it would be unkind to warn you. You would perish. Listen the bridge of this lost world is out. Turn with your whole heart to Christ.

Conclusion

So in the entire Psalm we see a progression. The **counsel** you put in your heart and mind will lead you to produce **fruit**. And that fruit will lead you to a **destiny**.

This Psalm gives us all a choice to make as to the direction of our lives. Psalm 1 begins with "**blessed**" and ends with "**perish**." True believers are blessed in Christ (**Eph 1:3ff**). We have every spiritual blessing in Christ in the heavenly realm where God is.

Augustine: God's blessing like trying to put the ocean into a thimble

When I was in Israel last January, I got to see the beautiful waves of the Mediterranean Sea in Caesarea, Israel where Cornelius was saved. Everywhere you can see the waves crashing into the shore. So, so much water.

One day, Augustine was walking on the seashore of that same body of water, where he lived in Algeria, North Africa, meditating on God when he saw a small boy running back and forth from the water to a spot on the seashore. The boy was using a sea shell to carry the water from the ocean and place it into a small hole in the sand.

Augustine approached him and asked, "My boy, what are doing?"

"I am trying to bring all the sea into this hole," the boy replied with a sweet smile.

"But that is impossible, my dear child, the hole cannot contain all that water" said Augustine. So he realized it is impossible to receive all the blessing God has for us. Living in the blessing of God is like trying to fill a thimble with an ocean of water.

¹² Ibid.