

Psalm 1 contrasts the way of the righteous and the wicked. The righteous person delights in God's law, meditates on it day and night, and is like a fruitful tree planted by streams of water—prosperous and steadfast. In contrast, the wicked are like chaff blown away by the wind; they will not stand in judgment nor belong among the righteous. The psalm concludes by affirming that the Lord watches over the way of the righteous, but the way of the wicked leads to destruction.

Text (ESV)

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.

Historical & Cultural Context

- **Psalm 1 is anonymous**, traditionally attributed to David by some, but its placement suggests it was chosen as an introduction to the entire Psalter. It establishes a foundation for the themes of worship, obedience, and God's rule.
 - **Wisdom Contrast:** The psalm echoes themes from Proverbs and Deuteronomy, particularly the *Two Ways* motif (Deut. 30:15-20).
 - **Torah (Law of the LORD)** was not merely legal code but God's revealed instruction, encompassing the Pentateuch and God's will for daily living.
 - **Meditation culture:** Ancient Hebrews meditated by vocal repetition, memorizing Scripture audibly, not just silently.
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Verse 1 – "Blessed is the man..."

- אֲשֶׁרִי ('ashrê) – *Blessed, happy, fortunate*. This term connotes a deep, God-given joy and well-being, not fleeting happiness.
- The progression:
 - Walks (הָלַךְ – *halak*) – Living by the advice or worldview of the ungodly.
 - Stands (עָמַד – *amad*) – Pausing, lingering with sinners.
 - Sits (יָשַׁב – *yashav*) – Settling down and identifying with mockers.

Insight: This is a **downward moral progression**—from exposure, to engagement, to entrenchment in sin.

Verse 2 – "His delight is in the law of the LORD..."

- חֶפֶץ (hēphets) – *Delight, pleasure*. Suggests an inward longing or affection.
- תּוֹרַת יְהוָה (torat YHWH) – *Law of the LORD*. "Torah" means instruction, not just rules. The righteous love God's instruction.
- יְהַגֶּה (yehgeh) – *Meditates*. Root: *hagah*, meaning to murmur, mutter, ponder. Suggests audible, continual reflection.

Application: Spiritual stability begins with an **affections-based obedience**, not just dutiful compliance.

Verse 3 – "He is like a tree planted by streams of water..."

- שָׁתוּל (shatul) – *Planted*. Literally "transplanted" – suggesting intentional placement by a gardener (God).
- פְּלִגְיֵי־מַיִם (palge-mayim) – *Channels of water*. May refer to irrigation canals—symbolizing consistent nourishment.
- יָפְרִי (yifri) – *Bears fruit*. The outcome of spiritual vitality.

Image: The righteous are **rooted, resilient, and fruitful**—not driven by external circumstances.

Verse 4 – "The wicked are not so..."

- כָּמֹץ (kamotz) – *Chaff*. Useless husks blown away by wind—light, unstable, and worthless.

Contrast: The wicked are unrooted, transient, and spiritually weightless.

Verse 5 – "The wicked will not stand in the judgment..."

- לֹא־יָקוּמוּ (lo-yaqumu) – *Will not stand*. Not in strength or approval—condemned in God's presence.
- עֵדַת צְדִיקִים (adat tzaddikim) – *Assembly of the righteous*. A covenantal community—pointing to eschatological separation (cf. Matt. 25:31-46).

Judgment Theme: This looks ahead to final judgment—only the righteous (by faith) are vindicated.

Verse 6 – "The LORD knows the way of the righteous..."

- **יָדַע יְהוָה (yodea YHWH)** – *The LORD knows*. “Knows” (yada‘) implies **relational intimacy**, not mere awareness.
- **דֶּרֶךְ (derekh)** – *Way, path, journey*. Represents one's manner of life and destination.

Destiny contrast: God's intimate fellowship leads to life; the wicked's self-chosen path ends in destruction.

Key Themes

- **Moral Separation:** The godly separate from sin and walk in righteousness.
 - **Delight in the Word:** Affection for God's law is central to a stable, fruitful life.
 - **Two Ways:** The righteous and the wicked live on divergent paths with eternal consequences.
 - **Judgment and Vindication:** God will separate the wicked from the righteous.
 - **God's Sovereign Care:** He intimately "knows" His people.
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Applications for Today's Christian

1. **Guard your spiritual influences (v.1)**
What voices shape your worldview—media, friends, podcasts, culture?
 2. **Delight in and meditate on Scripture (v.2)**
Is your time in God's Word marked by duty or delight? How can you grow in joyful meditation?
 3. **Pursue rootedness and fruitfulness (v.3)**
Are you spiritually consistent or easily shaken? What's nourishing your soul?
 4. **Live with eternity in view (vv.5–6)**
Do your daily choices reflect confidence in coming judgment and hope?
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Reflective Questions for Deeper Study

1. How does Psalm 1 set the tone for the rest of the Psalms?
2. What do the metaphors of “tree” and “chaff” reveal about spiritual character?
3. How does the idea of “delight” affect your personal Bible study habits?
4. What subtle ways do modern Christians 'sit in the seat of mockers'?
5. How does Christ fulfill the image of the truly righteous person in Psalm 1? (Cf. Matt. 3:17; Heb. 4:15)