

STUDIES  
THROUGH  
THE  
PSALMS

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PSALMS 1

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## “BLESSED IS THE MAN”

Introduction:

The first book in the fivefold division of the Book of Psalms appears to have been once in a separate Davidic collection. The name Lord, Hebrew Yahweh, occurs 272 times, while the more general 'Elohim is found only 15 times. The psalms are varied in content, but the moral teaching is simple and direct. Evident throughout this division is a positive faith in the justice of God. Psalm 1 serves as an introduction to the entire Psalter, while Psalm 2 introduces the collection in Book I. The fact that some manuscripts list Psalm 3 as the first psalm makes the introductory character of 1 and 2 more apparent. It is further possible that 1 and 2 were originally joined as one psalm, beginning and ending with "Blessed." All except 1, 2, 10, and 33 are connected with David in the title annotations.

This psalm presents in sharp contrast two extremes - the truly righteous way of life and the basically wicked way. The contrast introduces in a didactic manner the two categories of men to be described throughout the Psalter. The psalmist continues the antithesis by showing the present and future destinies of each group.

Also this Psalm firmly establishes the Biblical truth that there is no middle ground, or gray area in respect to our relationship with God. We are either walking in righteousness or unrighteousness. It would seem as though David wants to remind us of the importance of **HOLINESS**. This Psalm begins by talking about **BLESSINGS.**

### I. THE DIRECTION OF RIGHTEOUSNESS, (eight characteristics): vv. 1-3

- [1] “Walks”
- [2] “Stands”
- [3] “Sits”
- [4] “Delights”
- [5] “Meditates”
- [6] “Planted”
- [7] “Fruitful”
- [8] “Prosperous”

## A. The blessed man (1:1-3)

1:1. With three trilogies of expressions the psalmist described the life of the **blessed** man: he **does not walk... stand or sit** in the **counsel... way or seat of the wicked** (ungodly), **sinner**s, or **mockers** (scorners). With each parallel unit the expression becomes more intense. This signifies a progression from a casual influence of ungodly people to collusion with them in their scorn against the righteous. One who is **not** characterized by this evil influence is “blessed,” that is, he is right with God and enjoys the spiritual peace and joy that results from that relationship.

1:2. A godly person is influenced not by unrighteous people but by his meditation on the Word of God. Such meditation necessarily involves study and retention. This is possible only if he has a desire to do so, here referred to as a **delight**. The psalmists found direction, not drudgery, from **the Law of God**.

1:3. For all who take their delight in living by God’s Word, there is prosperity. Under the image of a fruitful **tree**, the psalmist declared that **whatever** the righteous do will prosper (cf. 92:12-14). Two qualifications need to be noted. First, the **fruit**, that is, the prosperity, is produced **in its season** and not necessarily immediately after planting. Second, what the godly person does will be controlled by the Law of God (1:2). So if a person meditates on God’s Word, his actions will be godly, and his God-controlled activities will prosper, that is, come to their divinely directed fulfillment.

## II. THE DIRECTION OF UNRIGHTEOUSNESS, (three characteristics) vv. 4-6

- [1] “Like chaff”
- [2] “Want stand”
- [3] “Sinners”

### The wicked (1:4)

1:4. In strong contrast with a blessed person (v. 1) is an ungodly person. The Hebrew word *rāšāʿ* is often translated **wicked** (cf. vv. 1, 5-6) but that may connote gross evil. People described by *rāšāʿ* are not in covenant relationship with God; they live according to their passions. They are not godly.

They may do kind and charitable deeds, but God's evaluation of them is that they are without eternal merit.

The psalmist compared them to **chaff**, the worthless husks of the grain blown **away** by **the wind** in the process of winnowing. Such is the contrast with the fruitful (cf. v. 3), valuable, righteous person.

### C. The judgment (1:5-6)

**1:5.** On the basis of the contrast between the godly and **the wicked**, the psalmist wrote that God will separate **the righteous** from the wicked **in the judgment**. The righteous are those who are related by covenant with the Lord, who live by His Word, who produce things of eternal value. God will divide the righteous and sinners as a man separates wheat from tares.

**1:6.** The basis for this judgment is the Lord's knowledge. The first half of the verse, **The Lord watches over** (lit., "knows") **the way of the righteous**, is best understood by the antithetical parallelism, **the way of the wicked will perish**. Salvation in the day of judgment is equated with being known by the Lord (cf. [Matt\\_7:23](#)). In [Psalm\\_1:6](#) "the way of the righteous" is contrasted with "the way of the wicked." "The way" means one's whole manner of life including what directs it and what it produces. The worthless life of the ungodly will not endure.

CONCLUSION: