

# TWO WAYS OF LIFE CONTRASTED

## PSALM 1:1-6

### ADEOYE, EMMANUEL

Ps 1 is a wisdom psalm and focuses on God's Word, God's blessing on those who obey it and meditate on it, and God's ultimate judgment on those who rebel. Wisdom psalms also wrestle with the problem of evil in the world and why God permits the prosperity of the wicked who reject His law. Other wisdom psalms include **10; 12; 15; 19; 32; 34; 37; 49; 50; 52; 53; 73; 78; 82; 91; 92; 94; 111; 112; 119; 127; 128; 133**, and **139:1**. While this psalm depicts two ways, it describes three different persons and how they relate to the blessing of the Lord.

The Person Who Receives a Blessing from God (vv. 1-2). God's covenant with Israel made it clear that He would bless their obedience and judge their disobedience (**Lev 26; Deut 28:1**).

The word "blessed" is *asher*, the name of one of Jacob's sons (**Gen 30:12**). It's plural: "*O the happiness's! O the blessedness's!*" The person described here met the conditions and therefore God blessed him. If we want God's blessing, we, too, must meet the conditions.

***We must be directed by the Word (v. 1)***. Israel was a unique and separate people; they were among the other nations but not to be contaminated by them (**Num 23:9; Ex 19:5-6; Deut 32:8-10; 33:28**). So it is with God's people today: we are in the world but not of the world (**John 17:11-17**). We must beware of friendship with the world (**James 4:4**) that leads to being spotted by the world (**James 1:27**) and even loving the world (**1 John 2:15-17**).

The result will be conforming to the world (**Rom. 12:1-2**) and, if we don't repent, being condemned with the world (**1 Cor. 11:32**). Lot looked toward Sodom, pitched his tent toward Sodom, and soon moved into Sodom (**Gen. 13:10-12; 14:12**).

Though he was a saved man (**2 Peter 2:7-8**), Lot lost all that he had when the Lord destroyed the cities of the plain (**Gen. 18-19; 1 Cor. 3:11-23**). We move into sin and disobedience gradually (see **Prov 4:14-15 and 7:6ff**). If you follow the wrong counsel, then you will stand with the wrong companions and finally sit with the wrong crowd. When Jesus was arrested, Peter didn't follow Christ's counsel and

flee from the garden (**Matt 26:31; John 16:32; 18:8**), but followed and entered the high priest's courtyard.

There he stood with the enemy (**John 18:15-18**) and ultimately sat with them (**Luke 22:55**). The result was denying Christ three times. The "ungodly" are people who are willfully and persistently evil; "sinners" are those who miss the mark of God's standards but who don't care; the "scornful" make light of God's laws and ridicule that which is sacred (see **Prov 1:22; 3:24; 21:24**).<sup>2</sup> When laughing at holy things and disobeying holy laws become entertainment, then people have reached a low level indeed.

### ***We must be delighted with the Word (v. 2).***

We move from the negative in verse 1 to the positive. Delighting in the Word and meditating on the Word must go together (**119:15-16,23-24,47-48,77-78**), for whatever we enjoy, we think about and pursue. "Meditate" in the Hebrew means "to mutter, to read in an undertone," for orthodox Jews speak as they read the Scriptures, meditate and pray. God's Word is in their mouth (Josh 1:8). If we speak to the Lord about the Word, the Word will speak to us about the Lord.

This is what is meant by "abiding in the Word" (**1 John 2:14,24**). As God's people, we should prefer God's Word to *food* (**119:103; Job 23:12; Jer 15:17; Matt 4:4; 1 Peter 2:2**), *sleep* (**119:55,62,147-148,164**), *wealth* (**119:14,72,127,162**), and *friends* (**119:23,51,95,119**). The way we treat the Bible is the way we treat Jesus Christ, for the Bible is His Word to us. The verbs in verse 1 are in the perfect tense and speak of a settled way of life, while in verse 2, "meditate" is the imperfect tense and speaks of constant practice. "He keeps meditating."<sup>3</sup>

### **THE PERSON WHO IS A BLESSING (V. 3)**

God blesses us that we might be a blessing to others (**Gen. 12:2**). If the blessing stays with us, then the gifts become more important than the Giver, and this is idolatry. We are to become channels of God's blessing to others. It's a joy to *receive* a blessing but an even greater joy to *be* a blessing. "It is more blessed to give than to receive" (**Acts 20:35**).

The tree is a familiar image in Scripture, symbolizing both a kingdom (**Ezek 17:24; Dan 4:1; Matt 13:32**) and an individual (**52:8; 92:12-14; Prov 11:30; Isa 44:4 and 58:11; Jer 17:5-8; Matt 7:15-23**). Balaam saw the people of Israel as a "garden by a river" with trees in abundance (**Num 24:6**).

Like a tree, the godly person is alive, beautiful, fruitful, useful, and enduring. The most important part of a tree is the hidden root system that draws up water and nourishment, and the most important part of the believer's life is the "spiritual root system" that draws on the hidden resources we have in Christ (**Eph 3:17; Col 2:7**). This is known as "abiding in Christ" (**John 15:1-9**). In Scripture, water for drinking

is a picture of the Spirit of God (**John 7:37-39; 1 Cor 10:4**), while water for washing pictures the Word of God (**Ps 119:9; John 15:3; Eph 5:26**). Thirst for water is an image of thirst for God (**42:1; 63:1; 143:6; Matt 5:6; Rev 22:17**), and the river is often a

picture of God's provision of spiritual blessing and help for His people (**36:8; 46:4; 78:16; 105:41; Ex 17:5-6; Num 20:9-11; Ezek 47:1; and Rev 22:1-2**). We can't nourish and support ourselves; we need to be rooted in Christ and drawing upon His spiritual power. To meditate on the Word (v. 2) is one source of spiritual energy, as are prayer and fellowship with God's people. "Religion lacks depth and volume because it is not fed by hidden springs," wrote Alexander Maclaren. Trees may wither and die, but the believer who abides in Christ stays fresh, green, and fruitful (see **92:12-14**).

"Fruit" speaks of many different blessings: winning people to Christ (**Rom 1:13**), godly character (**Rom 6:22; Gal 5:22-23**), money given to the Lord's work (**Rom 15:28**), service and good works (**Col 1:10**), and praise to the Lord (**Heb 13:15**). It's a tragedy when a believer ignores the "root system" and begins to wither. We must remember that the tree doesn't eat the fruit; others eat it. We must also remember that fruit isn't the same as "results," because fruit has in it the seed for more fruit. Fruit comes from life, the life of God flowing in and through us.

The godly person described in verses 1-3 is surely a picture of our Lord Jesus Christ, who, according to John 14:6 is the way (v. 1), the truth (v. 2), and the life (v. 3).

### **THE PERSON WHO NEEDS A BLESSING (VV. 4-6)**

The first half of the psalm describes the godly person, while the last half focuses on the ungodly, *the people the godly must seek to reach with the gospel*. How desperately these people need to know God and receive His blessings in Christ! The wicked are pictured in many ways in Scripture, but the image here is *chaff*. 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.

John the Baptist used these same images of the tree, fruit, and chaff to warn sinners to repent (**Matt 3:7-12**). The wicked of this world seem rich and substantial, but from God's point of view, they are cheap, unsubstantial, and destined for judgment. (See **Ps 73**.) No wonder Jesus used the garbage dump outside Jerusalem (*gehenna*) as a picture of hell because that's where the cheap waste ends up in the fire (**Mark 9:43-48**). The chaff is so near the grain, but in the end, the two are separated, and the chaff is blown away or burned. But until that happens, we have the opportunity to witness to them and seek to bring them to Christ.

There is a coming day of judgment, and the Lord, the Righteous judge, will separate the wheat from the tares, the sheep from the goats, and the trees from the chaff, and no unbeliever will be able to stand in the assembly of the righteous. The verb *knows* in verse 6 doesn't mean that God is aware of them intellectually and has the godly in his mind. Rather, it means that God has chosen them and providentially watched over them and brought them finally to His glory. The word *know* is used, as in **Amos 3:2**, to mean "to choose, to enter into covenant relationship.

with, to be personally acquainted with."<sup>4</sup> The Jewish Publication Society translation of **Amos 3:2** is: "You alone have I singled out of all the families of the earth." That same translation gives verse 6 as "For the Lord cherishes the way of the righteous ...." *At the last judgment, Jesus says to the wicked, "I never knew you; depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness"* (**Matt 7:23**, NKJV).

This psalm begins with "blessed" and ends with "perish." True believers are blessed in Christ (**Eph 1:3ff**). They have received God's blessing, and they ought to be a blessing to others, especially to the chaff that will one day be thrown into the fire. Let's seek to win as many of them as we can.

- **CONCLUSION**

The secret and power of Psalm 1 is an eye opener and foundation of the books of Psalm. It is a spiritual philosophy to mankind. The world rotates around this because of its importance. This book **confirms and propagate why peace elude us and what to do in order to enjoy peace.**

Remember. The psalms are replete with memories of God's faithfulness to his people. ... When we remember God and dwell on His characteristics as described in Psalms, we can rest knowing God is with us. ...