



DEVOTIONAL | Psalm 1:1

*Blessed is the man who does not walk in the counsel of the wicked
or stand in the way of sinners or sit in the seat of mockers. (NIV)*

*Blessed is the man that walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly,
nor standeth in the way of sinners, nor sitteth in the seat of the scornful. (KJV)*

*Blessed is the man who walks not in the counsel of the ungodly,
nor stands in the path of sinners, nor sits in the seat of the scornful. (NKJV)*

Overview: Contrasting two distinct lifestyles is the intent of the psalmist. Verses one to three describe the righteous or believing person. Four and five outline the wicked. Verse six summarizes the sharp disparity. Spurgeon describes this chapter as “the preface psalm, having in it a notification of the contents of the entire book. It is the psalmist’s desire to teach us the way to blessedness and to warn us of the sure destruction of sinners.”¹

Word-view: *Blessed* has lost its potency in our day and language. To be blessed means to be in a state of righteous association. No one can be called righteous on his own (Romans 3:10). But by faith we can be in a happy and holy relationship because of what the Lord does with our sin, as detailed in Psalm 32:1, 2. One Bible teacher translates *blessed* this way: “Oh the happiness, many times over ...”² May you be blessed in the Lord today!

Inner-view: Listening to wicked advice (*counsel of the ungodly*), taking one’s stand in that moral character or manner of life (*way/path of sinners*) and ending up in the dwelling place of mocking the Lord (*the seat of the scornful*) is too familiar! Satan led Eve and Adam down that death spiral (Genesis 3:1-6). Our Lord refused to be trapped by this evil strategy (Luke 4:1-13). No wonder that James gives us a strong warning about temptation (James 1:13-16). God will never give you recommendation toward evil! Don’t let the inner desires combine with wrong advice and conceive of sin. It only produces death (Romans 6:23).

Worldview: How is it possible to “stray” from the good beginnings of childhood in Christ? No one becomes suddenly sinful. A progression of walking ... standing ... sitting occurs where someone becomes increasingly more comfortable with sin the further he moves from God’s Word. And that’s not just true about youth but also adults!

¹ C.H. Spurgeon, *The Treasury of David*. Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1977, Vol. I, page 1.

² Charles R. Swindoll, *Living Beyond the Daily Grind*. Dallas: Word Publishing, 1988, Vol. I, page 6.



DEVOTIONAL | Psalm 1:2

*But his delight is in the law of the LORD,
and on His law he meditates day and night. (NIV)*

*But his delight is in the law of the LORD;
and in His law doth he meditate day and night. (KJV)*

*But his delight is in the law of the LORD,
and in His law he meditates day and night. (NKJV)*

Overview: Verse two portrays the righteous man as delighting in the law of God. Take a look at worshippers going to church. Would you call the facial expressions joyful? Ask teens what they think about Bible study. Is it glee? Yet the believer is said to be finding her pleasant pleasure and purpose in God and His Word. “There is no joy in this world comparable to the joy of knowing God. The truly happy man finds his delight, his joy, *in the law of the Lord.*”³

Word-view: Law at first does not seem to be something in which to delight. But it refers to all of the commands and statutes of relationship which were written down. God gave Moses the law because He had a relationship with Israel—“*I am the LORD your God*” (Exodus 20:2, underline added). The king was commissioned to read it (Deuteronomy 17:19); the psalmist extols its lofty qualities (Psalm 19:6-12); the prophet pronounces judgment on the basis of it (Amos 2:4); but the Holy Spirit is the one who fulfills it in our lives through Christ (Romans 8:2-4).

Inner-view: How does one *meditate day and night*?

Young ministry workers can follow Downing’s three guidelines:⁴

1. Anchor your mind in study and memorization at an intentional time every day. (See Colossians 3:1, 2.)
2. Focus your thoughts the last minutes before going to bed—your mind will ponder those contemplations all night. It works against you, also! If you go to bed with problems on your mind, you *meditate* on them throughout the sleep and wake up troubled and tired! (See Joshua 1:8.)
3. Obey during the day with what the Holy Spirit brings to mind. (See John 14:26.)

Worldview: How different the meditation of a Christian and the false “transcendental” meditation of yoga or eastern religions! Christians fill and focus their minds with the Word to know the Lord. False meditation empties the mind and opens the thinking to false gods and evil.

³ Erling C. Olsen, *Meditations in the Psalms*. New York: Loizeaux Brothers, 1939, Vol. I, page 6.

⁴ Adapted from Jim Downing, *Meditation; The Bible Tells You How*. Colorado Springs: NavPress, 1976.



DEVOTIONAL | Psalm 1:3

He is like a tree planted by streams of water, which yields its fruit in season and whose leaf does not wither. Whatever he does prospers. (NIV)

And he shall be like a tree planted by the rivers of water, that bringeth forth his fruit in his season; his leaf also shall not wither; and whatsoever he doeth shall prosper. (KJV)

He shall be like a tree planted by the rivers of water, that brings forth its fruit in its season, whose leaf also shall not wither; and whatever he does shall prosper. (NKJV)

Overview: The *planted tree* is a common symbol of a believer. Jeremiah picks up the idea and contrasts the believer with those who are wicked (Jeremiah 17:7, 8). The psalmist says that the one who trusts in the Lord will be founded, fresh, flourishing, fruitful and full (Psalm 92:12-14).

Word-view: *Fruit in season* may not make sense to children because they can buy apples year-round at the grocery store! But every farmer (and growing believer) knows what a *season* means. Times of dormancy, planting, new growth and harvest occur in all of our lives. And in ministry, don't let the wait discourage you. There will be a time of harvest (Psalm 126:6; 2 Timothy 2:6; James 5:7, 8).

Inner-view: What should we expect as followers of Christ? "Fruit is expected, fruit is borne, and it comes also in the time in which it should come."⁵ Have you ever received a red, delicious apple, chilled it, polished

it and bit into it—only to find out it had been frozen and then thawed and ruined in the process? No such disappointment with your life in Christ! The joyful expectation is glorious, the Lord Himself is the keeper of the orchard, He will complete what He has started, and you will see the result of what He has planned (John 15:1; Philippians 2:13; 1 Thessalonians 3:13). You won't be shamed or dismayed at the result (Romans 9:33; 10:11)! The power, the process and the produce are God-directed and Holy Spirit-driven.

Worldview: Different seasons call for different cultivation methods. Planting takes lots of time and good seed—taking the time for children to know Scripture is a wise endeavor. Fruitfulness involves discipline, pruning and continuing cultivation—teens may resist but need this loving influence. Pacing and connection with Christ is demanded of the more mature believer, especially when difficulties and length of days can discourage.

⁵ C.H. Spurgeon, *The Treasury of David*. Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1977, Vol. I, page 7.



DEVOTIONAL | Psalm 1:4

Not so the wicked! They are like chaff that the wind blows away. (NIV)

The ungodly are not so: but are like the chaff which the wind driveth away. (KJV)

The ungodly are not so, but are like the chaff which the wind drives away. (NKJV)

Overview: Verse four sets the sharp contrast of the wicked, unbelieving person. No stability in drought times! No fruitfulness, only the faint remembrance of harvests past. That shows the total opposite state of the ungodly from that mentioned in verse three. *Not so* exposes the futility of a life apart from God. Don't be deceived by the fleeting apparent prosperity of the wicked. David lays out in proper style the opinion of the Lord toward the wicked in Psalm 37. The believer should continue to trust that the Lord is aware and will judge at the proper time.

Word-view: *Chaff* "is the outer part of the grain seeds which separates at the time of threshing—the husks and grasses which fall and blow about during harvest time. *Chaff* is completely worthless. It is the refuse and impurities blown away in the winnowing process."⁶ An evil lifestyle is wasteful and worthless.

Inner-view: Young people talk about being "blown away" by a surprise or a new idea. What event or idea makes you lose footing in the journey of life? A woman was diagnosed with a life-threatening degenerative nerve disease over 25 years ago. Her original goal of surviving to see her youngest graduate from high school has given way to a fruitful life of blessing and example. Many have been encouraged to trust in the Lord by that family's model of faith under fire!

Worldview: "Godless philosophy leads to a sense of purposelessness and a lifestyle that is frustrating."⁷ As adults we must guard our kids and ourselves against the subtle influences to stop trusting in the Lord. Colossians 2:8 warns us we can wander away from Christ—and not just in licentious, loose-living ways but also in legalistic, going-beyond-the-command patterns.

⁶ Charles R. Swindoll, *Living Beyond the Daily Grind*. Dallas: Word Publishing, 1988, Vol. 1, page 12.

⁷ Stuart Briscoe, *What Works When Life Doesn't*. Wheaton: Victor Books, 1976, page 14.



DEVOTIONAL | Psalm 1:5

Therefore the wicked will not stand in the judgment, nor sinners in the assembly of the righteous. (NIV)

Therefore the ungodly shall not stand in the judgment, nor sinners in the congregation of the righteous. (KJV)

Therefore the ungodly shall not stand in the judgment, nor sinners in the congregation of the righteous. (NKJV)

Overview: Contrast “today” and “that day!” Today, the wicked seem to prosper and be OK. But in “that day,” the Lord will burn up the chaff with *unquenchable fire* (Matthew 3:12). The synonymous poetry of this psalm declares two lines with the same meaning: Wicked people cannot last, and believing people do! “Judgment is coming in which the ungodly cannot stand; they will be swept away by it, nor can they have a share and part in the gathering of the righteous in that day.”⁸ Remember, righteousness does not come from one’s own effort but is given through faith in the Lord Jesus Christ (Philippians 3:9).

Word-view: *The assembly of the righteous* could refer to the gathering of believers here on earth, but most likely it is describing the eternal state of those who put their faith in the Lord (Hebrews 12:22, 23).

Inner-view: Guilt is a very real emotion even when based on a false premise. Godly sorrow leads to repentance, a change of mind and direction. The difference between godly sorrow and false guilt could be summarized in this way:

	False guilt:	Godly sorrow:
1. Cause:	Not always known	Usually specific
2. Manifestation:	A cloud of ill feeling	Focused realization of sin
3. Compares to:	Others or one’s own perspective	The righteous view of the Holy One
4. Leads to:	More uneasy feelings	Repentance
5. Further leads:	To death	To no regrets in the new life

Do you find yourself being led to a change of mind? Are you in need of mercy from the Lord? Isaiah 55:7 invites you to return to God and receive from Him. Don’t allow others to keep you from this faith that leads to eternal life (2 Peter 3:9).

Worldview: In these days of conflicting worldviews, some would say that every person sees the same moon after climbing up the hill a different way. In other words, all ways lead to eternal life and happiness. But Jesus said, *“I am the way.”* No one can come to the Father except through Him! Eternal life is found only in Christ (John 3:36).

⁸ A.C. Gaebelein, *The Book of Psalms*. New York: Our Hope Publications, 1939, page 20.



DEVOTIONAL | Psalm 1:6

*For the LORD watches over the way of the righteous,
but the way of the wicked will perish. (NIV)*

*For the LORD knoweth the way of the righteous:
but the way of the ungodly shall perish. (KJV)*

*For the LORD knows the way of the righteous,
but the way of the ungodly shall perish. (NKJV)*

Overview: The last verse of the opening psalm summarizes the intent of our relationship with God. Belief brings blessing and righteousness. Unbelief results in wickedness, judgment and death. It's that pointed. It's that clear. We should tell all we know of the wonderful joy which comes from doing things God's way! "Above and beyond everything else, the believer has the calm, settled assurance that all is well and that God is honoring the one who honors Him."⁹

Word-view: We usually say *ungodly* to mean those who have a concentration of sin and its effects in their lives. So, we usually feel exempt from that status. Bible teacher Erling Olsen rightly asserts, "That phrase describes all who are outside of Jesus Christ. Every man is ungodly. Man does not possess godliness—he is unlike God; he does not meet the requirements of God."¹⁰

Inner-view: Ever go to a place you have never been before and feel as if someone is watching you? That can be an unsettling perspective. We sometimes get the idea that God is really "Big Brother" and is looking to see when we will mess up so He can discipline us (Jeremiah 29:11). But the One who knows the way of the righteous is not looking over us for harm but for good! In Christ, the separation and strife in our relationship with the Father has been reconciled into a peaceful hope (Romans 5:1; 15:13). That's why His promise to "never leave, never forsake" is so security-producing in our lives! He is for us! He is with us!

Worldview: Ravi Zacharias was told by an agnostic professor that no one could know whether or not he had eternal life. Ravi asked, "And how do you know that?"¹¹ We have a security in knowing the One who knows the way!

⁹ Stuart Briscoe, *What Works When Life Doesn't*. Wheaton: Victor Books, 1976, page 21.

¹⁰ Erling C. Olsen, *Meditations in the Psalms*. New York: Loizeaux Brothers, 1939, Vol. I, page 5.

¹¹ Ravi Zacharias, *Absolute Truth in Relative Terms*. Atlanta: Let My People Think, 12/01/2007 Podcast.