

1. **Introduction:** Psalm 1 introduces and prepares a foundation for the other psalms.
 - Psalm 1 is intensely practical. The theme is a description of two distinct approaches to living – righteous and unrighteous
 - Psalm 1 describes the behavior of righteous and unrighteous people and the consequences of their chosen behavior. God calls us to righteous living but how?
 - The Apostle Paul’s letter to the Romans which we will soon begin to study deals with the question of “how a person can stand righteous before God.”
 - “Righteous living” is not a natural state for fallen people. To enable people to be trained in the requirements of God’s law, He gave Israel His Law so that they could clearly know the difference between unrighteous and righteous living.
 - God requires perfect obedience to His Law for a person to be able to stand “in the right” before Him. But, since the Fall, no one can perfectly obey God’s law.
 - The difficulty is obedience must be perfect in every thought, every word, and every deed. Humans are not capable of such perfection.
 - Can the dilemma be resolved? In Romans, Paul explains how God in grace resolved the dilemma by providing a way to righteousness apart from perfect obedience to the Law.
2. **Joshua’s Challenge:** Each person must choose either to serve God or other gods.
 - Joshua said,, “*choose this day whom you will serve, whether the gods your fathers served in the region beyond the River, or the gods of the Amorites in whose land you dwell. But as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord*” (Joshua 24:15).
3. **Sermon on the Mount:** The concept of two possible “ways” of life is found throughout Scripture. In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus gives a series of examples: (1.) Two gates that lead to different roads. (2.) Two trees with radically different types of fruit. (3.) Two houses with radically different foundations.
 - Jesus said, “Enter through the narrow gate. For wide is the gate and broad is the road that leads to destruction, and many enter through it. But small is the gate and narrow the road that leads to life, and only a few find it .” (Mt. 7:13-14)
4. **Decisions:** Making right decisions is vital in living a life that pleases God.
 - The decisions we make link together to form our specific path through life. All paths lead to either righteousness or unrighteousness. There is no neutral path.
 - A perfectly righteous path will contain no decisions inconsistent with God’s revealed commands or character.
 - Whether a believer or unbeliever, no one in their earthly life makes all righteous or all unrighteous choices. But, the general direction of a believer’s choices is toward increasing righteousness.
 - The key to moving steadily toward righteousness is a decision to believe and trust God.

- In a great mystery of grace, God promises to see Christ's righteousness in those who are "in Christ, His straight path rather than their actual wobbly path.
 - Every moral decision always impacts character. Righteous choices strengthen virtues. Unrighteous choices weaken them.
 - Every choice either strengthens our character making it easier to follow the path of righteousness or weakens character making it more difficult.
 - There is no unimportant moral choice. Decisions we make chart our path through life.
 - God's commandments, His law, and His revealed character are to be our guide.
 - Wisdom consists of being able to discern God's truth, evaluate alternatives and their consequences, and establish priorities so that moral decisions can be made consistent with God's commandments and character. Be an imitator of God.
 - Psalm 1 is brief but contains a clear, carefully developed expression of the stark choice between the way of the godly (righteous) and that of the ungodly (wicked).
 - Attention is directed to the great risk involved in being drawn gradually into wickedness.
 - Small beginnings can lead to very bad situations. We are to guard constantly against wrong things that seem trivial in the big scheme of things.
 - The psalm also provides an interesting pointer to the Messiah.
5. ***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 the chaff that the wind drives away. ⁵ Therefore the wicked will not stand in the judgement, 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.***
- The first 3 verses concern a righteous person. The next 2 verses deal with an unrighteous person. The last verse indicates the two different destinies.
6. ***"Blessed"*** means supremely happy or fulfilled. Blessedness does not depend on circumstances. It depends on choices made.
- Keep in mind that choices are determined by inclinations produced by our intellect, emotions, and imagination. The will weighs the possibilities and chooses the "weightiest" one at the instant of choice.
 - Decisions are to be judged as good or bad based on whether the decision is consistent with God's revealed character. Decisions we make join to form our path through life.
 - All paths lead to either righteousness or unrighteousness. No neutral paths through life. You must choose one of two paths, righteousness or unrighteousness.
 - Fulfillment of God's purpose in life is achieved by following the path of godliness.
 - Choosing the wrong path leads to sure and certain destruction.

- Where we obtain counsel, where we choose to walk, and sit, and where we find that which delights our heart are choices that indicate the path we are walking.
 - A godly person does not walk in the counsel of the wicked, nor stand in the way of sinners, nor sit in the seat of mockers.
7. ***“Walk, stand, and sit”*** are progressive in intensity and involvement.
- To walk in the counsel of the wicked means you have chosen a definite planned direction of association with the wicked and their actions.
 - “Ungodly” people understand what they are doing. Flirting with a wicked life is dangerous. Walking with wickedness can easily become standing with wickedness and then to sitting with wickedness.
8. ***“Walk in the counsel”*** implies deliberately coming near established wickedness and listening and learning from those who are practicing wickedness.
- The righteous refuse to deliberately expose themselves to the possibility of being drawn into the thoughts and actions of the wicked.
 - To not walk in the counsel of the wicked means not imitating the actions of the wicked for any reason, not even in a casual “just going along with friends” sense.
 - Wickedness is always meaningful, never a just something to do to pass the time.
 - Don’t allow spiritual erosion to begin. That is the best way to avoid it gaining a foothold.
9. ***“Standing in the way of sinners”*** is a step beyond casual walking in the presence of sin. The walker slows down, takes an interest in what is happening.
- Then, in violation of God’s commands, stands to get a better view.
 - If we begin to walk in the presence of sin, it is easy to slip into friendship with a group of mockers who continually make light of God and His commandments.
10. **Lot and Abraham:** Think of decisions made by Lot (Abraham’s nephew) and Joseph.
- Lot deliberately chose to walk in the way of the ungodly (Gen. 13:11) in the cities of the fruitful plain. He stopped and took a position among the wicked (Gen. 13:12-13). He settled in to live in the city of the wicked, taking a seat among those who continually mocked the Lord (Gen. 19:1).
 - With Joseph it was totally different. Through no fault of his own, he ended up in the presence of the wicked. Potiphar’s wife pursued Joseph, but Joseph literally ran from her alluring advances (Gen. 39:1-12).
 - Joseph did not of his own inclination walk in the counsel of the wicked, stand in the way of sinners, nor sit in the seat of mockers. When wickedness came for him, he ran away.
 - Verse 1 implies the way of the wicked through relationships avoided by the righteous.
11. ***“Sitting in the seat of scoffers”*** suggests a settling down for a long visit, a conference with the scoffers. Perhaps it will end in the “sitter” becoming knowledgeable enough in wickedness to be a “sitting teacher” enticing others.
- The picture to grasp is this: We shall be happy and fulfilled if we maintain a life of purity, free from flirtation with evil.

- There is an implication that god company is dangerous to good character. As the psalm turns to a positive description of a righteous person, we might expect the godly way to be described in terms of relationships with godly people.
 - But instead, the godly person is described as one whose *“delight is in the law of the Lord”* on which *“he meditates day and night.”* A godly person is motivated by God’s Word. Why mention the Law?
 - Staying on the path of righteousness requires a standard, a clear direction, a defining of the path. We find that direction in Psalm 119:9, 11, 97.
12. **Psalm 119:9, 11, 97:** *“How can a young man keep his way pure? By living according to your word... I have hidden your word in my heart that I might not sin against you... Oh, how I love your law! I meditate on it all day long.”*
- Psalm 1 focuses on avoiding things that enable following an unrighteous path.
 - Verse 2 points the way to get on and stay on the path of righteousness.
 - Verse 3 declares the result achieved by following the path of righteousness.
 - One who delights in and meditates on God’s law draws spiritual nourishment from God’s Word like a tree draws nourishment from a nearby stream.
 - Though most of the land may be dry and barren and the winds hot, a tree planted by a stream can sink its roots down, draw nourishment, and will prosper and bear fruit. The godly person delighting in the Lord and His Word is like that.
 - Such a person draws spiritual water from a source that will never run dry.
 - Delighting in and meditating on God’s Word affects our “being” and our “doing.”
 - It allows us **to be** like a tree planted by a stream – i.e., fortified by the stream of truth from God’s Word enables us to become stable, rooted, solid, and strong.
 - It cause us to be able **to do** what we are designed to do, which is to produce good spiritual fruit in season.
 - Even in times of difficulty, a godly treelike soul drawing form the stream of God’s Word is undaunted – such a person prospers and fulfills the goals God has designed for their life even when circumstances are difficult.
13. **Two Final Ends:** The “two ways” of living lead to **two final ends**. Prov. 14:12 describes the destiny of the wicked. *“There is a way that seems right to man, but its end is the way to death.”* The destiny of the righteous is everlasting life with God.
- Believers know that the way of the righteous is the way of the Lord Jesus Christ who described Himself as *“the way and the truth and the life”* (Jn. 14:6).
 - Jesus promised to be always with those who follow Him. *“I am with you always, to the end of the age”* (Mt. 28:20).
14. **The Relationship of Psalm 1 to Christ:** James Montgomery Boice cites a story told by Harry Ironside of a man named Joseph Flacks who visited Palestine many years ago (before Israel was restored).

- Joseph Flacks had an opportunity to address a gathering of Jews and Arabs. He used Psalm 1 as the basis for his talk. He read the psalm slowly with emphasis.
- He then asked the question: *“Who is this blessed man of whom the psalmist speaks? This man never walked in the counsel of the wicked or stood in the way of sinners or sat in the seat of mockers. He was an absolutely sinless man.”*
- No one responded. So, Flacks asked, *“Was he our great father Abraham?”* One old man said, *“No it cannot be Abraham. He denied his wife and told a lie about her.”* Then Flacks said, *“Well, what about the lawgiver Moses?”*
- *“No”* someone said. *“It cannot be Moses. He killed a man, and he lost his temper by the waters of Meribah.”*
- Flacks suggested David, the man after God’s own heart. But David’s sins related to Bathsheba showed it couldn’t be him.
- There was a silence for a long time. Then an elderly Jew arose and said, *“My brothers, I have a little book here; it is called the New Testament. I have been reading it; and if I could believe this book, if I could be sure that it is true, I would say the man of the First Psalm was Jesus of Nazareth.”*
- Jesus is indeed the righteous man of Psalm 1. He is the only perfect man who ever lived, and He is the savior of sinners.
- The way of the righteous is the way of our Lord Jesus Christ. As He says in John 14:16, He is ***“the way and the truth and the life.”***
- The destiny of the righteous is everlasting life “in Christ.” Not so the wicked. The way of the wicked will perish. Apart from Christ, all perish.