

## Sermon Series: *Summer in the Psalms*

# The Way of the Righteous & the Way of the Wicked

### **Psalm 1 (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.

## Introduction

### **Why a Sermon Series in Psalms?**

Summer represents for most of us a slight change in the pattern of life. It's the season of having a vacation—of taking a holiday. It is a season of rest and refreshment. Here at Hope Church we give all of our Sunday school teachers the summer off, not because biblical teaching is unimportant but because it is of utmost importance.

We understand the blessing God intended in the principle of sabbath. We all need a season of rest and refreshment. There is a season of giving out and there is a season of taking in. There is to be a season of activity and there is to be a season of ceasing from activity. The summer is for us in New England a season of diminished activity. Therefore, it seemed good to us to step out of the sermon series in the Gospel of John for the summer and enter into a sermon series in the Psalms.

### **My Prayer for This Series: A Season of Spiritual Refreshment & Strengthening**

My prayer for this series is that it truly will be a season of spiritual refreshment and strengthening. [Or as was prayed by someone Wednesday evening, “a season of nearness” to the Lord.] When the

disciples returned from having been sent out by Jesus in pairs to preach the gospel in the towns and villages, he said to them, “*Come away by yourselves* [with me] *to a desolate place and rest a while*” (Mk 6:30). My prayer is that this summer will be a kind of spiritual ‘coming away’ from the busyness of life and resting a while in the wisdom and passion of the Psalms.

Week	Date	Psalm
2	Jul 8	11 (IW)
3	Jul 15	16
4	Jul 22	23
5	Aug 5	2 (MB)
6	Aug 12	25
7	Aug 19	27
8	Aug 26	32
9	Sep 2	51
10	Sep 9	56

### The Main Idea of this Psalm

Psalm 1 introduces the entire book of Psalms and lays before the reader two paths—one is the way of blessing and the other is the way of cursing; one way leads to life and the other to death; one is a way of enduring fruitfulness and the other of failing barrenness; one path is followed by the righteous and the other is followed by the wicked; one leads to “the holiness and happiness of the godly” and the other to “the sinfulness and the misery of the wicked.”<sup>1</sup> This calls to mind the word of the Lord spoken through Moses,

#### Deut 30:19-20 (ESV)

**19** *I call heaven and earth to witness against you today, that I have set before you life and death, blessing and curse. Therefore choose life, that you and your offspring may live, 20 loving the Lord your God, obeying his voice and holding fast to him, for he is your life and length of days...*

### Contrasting Two Ways

The main idea can be easily seen in a chiasm (from the Greek word *chi* which refers to our letter ‘X’), which structurally illustrates the literary meaning. Two ways are contrasted; the way of the righteous and the way of the wicked. “The ‘way’ is a common metaphor for ‘manner of life.’”<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Matthew Henry, *Matthew Henry's Commentary on the Whole Bible: Complete and Unabridged in One Volume* (Peabody: Hendrickson, 1994) Psalm 1.

<sup>2</sup> Willem A. VanGemeren, "Psalms" In , in *The Expositor's Bible Commentary, Volume 5: Psalms, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, Song of Songs*, ed. Frank E. Gaebelin (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1991), 54.

- A The way of the righteous (will be blessed) (v.1)
- B Stands in God's law (v.2)
- C Endures like a fruitful tree (v.3)
- C Passes away like chaff in wind (v.4)
- B Falls in day of judgment (v.5)
- A The way of the wicked (v.6, will perish, i.e. cursed)

The point of the psalm is to lay before the reader the simple fact that the way of the righteous is blessed while the way of the wicked is cursed. The psalmist does this by contrasting the blessedness of righteous who walk in the way of God over against adversity of the wicked who walk in the way of the world.<sup>3</sup> The goal is persuade all who will listen to turn away from walking in the way that leads to perishing and to turn to walking in the way that leads to blessing.

## The Way of the Righteous

**Psalm 1:1 (ESV)**

**1 Blessed is the man...**

### Blessed is the the Man

In the Hebrew, and thus the English, 'blessed' is the first word in the sentence, which means that word carries the literary emphasis. The word (אַשֶׁר *eh-sheer*) means 'happiness' or 'bliss.' It is used forty-four times in the OT, twenty-six of which are in the Psalter and eight in Proverbs. It appears in the Pentateuch only in Deut 33:29.<sup>4</sup> It is not a flighty, giddy kind of happiness, but happy "in the rich, full sense of happiness rooted in moral and mental and physical wellbeing."<sup>5</sup> The lifestyle the Psalmist is commending is one of blessing and happiness.

The Hebrew word used here for 'man' (*ish*) is often intended in the Old Testament to stand for a representative of humanity including both men and women. Here the word means any person who walks in the way of the righteous.

### Blessed By Whom?

But blessed by whom? Who is the one doing the blessing? It is, of course, the LORD, the maker and sustainer of heaven and earth. He is mentioned in verses two and six. The LORD is the One whose blessing falls upon 'the way of the righteous.'

<sup>3</sup> Frank E. Gaebelein, Willem VanGemern, Allen P. Ross et al., *The Expositor's Bible Commentary, Volume 5: Psalms, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, Song of Songs* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1991), 52.

<sup>4</sup> Victor P. Hamilton, "אַשֶׁר 183" In , in *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament*, ed. R. Laird Harris, Gleason L. Archer, Jr. and Bruce K. Waltke, electronic ed. (Chicago: Moody Press, 1999), 80-81.

<sup>5</sup> John Piper in the sermon "Meditate on the Word of the Lord Day and Night" available at <http://www.desiringgod.org/resource-library/sermons/meditate-on-the-word-of-the-lord-day-and-night>.

LORD in Hebrew is YHWH<sup>6</sup> *Yahweh* (יְהוָה), which is the personal name of the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, the God who revealed Himself to Moses at the burning bush, the God who delivered the children of Israel from the iron furnace of slavery in Egypt, the God who carried Israel through the wilderness as a man carries a son,<sup>7</sup> the one true God,<sup>8</sup> and this is the same God whom Jesus referred to as “my Father.”<sup>9</sup>

The blessing the psalmist holds out before you and me are the very blessings of the Creator of all the earth, the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. Do you desire His blessing? Does a life of blessing and happiness seem good to you? If so, then pay attention to how it can be found. The psalmist says a life of that kind of blessing can be had by not doing three things and doing two things.

### The Blessed Person Avoids Three Things

The way of the righteous is blessed by avoiding three things.

#### Psalm 1:1 (ESV)

*“Blessed is the man*

1. *... who walks not in the counsel of the wicked,*
2. *... nor stands in the way of sinners,*
3. *... nor sits in the seat of scoffers.*

### Walks Not In the Counsel of the Wicked

The one who is blessed ***does not walk in the counsel of the wicked***. The blessed one does not decide the course of her life based upon advice given by those who are wicked. The manner of life of those who are blessed by God is not informed by those who are wicked. If you want to walk in the way of the righteous then you need to carefully consider the character of those from whom you receive advice. The godly do not seek advice from the ungodly. The righteous do not ask the wicked how they ought to live.

‘Wicked’ is simply a word that no longer describes contemporary persons, not because it is an inaccurate descriptor of persons, but because evil has become so accepted to the contemporary world that evil and sin are not seen as wicked but simply normal. Who uses this word? Have you recently heard anyone referred to as wicked (and it actually mean wicked as defined by the dictionary [evil, morally wrong, bad, corrupt, sinful, harmful] and not how it is euphemistically used here in New England to mean ‘cool’)? Is there anyone who fits the definition? Perhaps only extreme cases such as Anders Breivik or Jerry Sandusky?

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<sup>6</sup> The most widely accepted meaning of the name is “the one who is, that is, the absolute and unchangeable one.” This is the name the Lord revealed to Moses (Ex 3:15; cf. vv 13–14; Jn 8:56–58). According to the Ten Commandments, the Jews were not to take this name in vain (Ex 20:2, 7). The Jews, therefore, regarded the name as so holy that they would not pronounce it but said instead *Adonai*, “Lord.” Originally the text was written only with consonants, but when the scholars called Masoretes added the vowel points, they inserted the vowels for *Adonai* as a reminder not to read the sacred name. Non-Hebraists combined the vowels of *Adonai* with the consonants of JHWH, producing a new form, “Jehovah,” which does not exist in the Hebrew language. The correct pronunciation of the name must have been *Yahweh*, but most translations render it Lord, using capital letters to distinguish it from other uses of the English word “Lord.” Walter A. Elwell and Philip Wesley Comfort, *Tyndale Bible Dictionary*, Tyndale reference library (Wheaton, IL: Tyndale House Publishers, 2001), 1248-49.

<sup>7</sup> Dt 1:31.

<sup>8</sup> Dt 4:35, 39; 1 Kg 8:60; Is 45:5, 22; 46:9.

<sup>9</sup> See Jn 5:17; 6:32, 40; 8:19; 8:38, 49, 54; 10:18, 29, 37; 14:7, 20, 21, 23; 15:1, 8, 15, 23, 24; 20:17.

While the term is often used in the general sense of ‘wrong’ (Ps. 18:21), it refers more specifically to evil, not in its moral or judicial sense, but in its active form, *i.e.* mischief (Nu. 16:26). As such, it denotes perversity of mind (Pr. 15:26; Rom. 1:29) by which the natural man surrenders himself to [his own] evil impulses (Ps. 10:1–11).<sup>10</sup>

The wicked are those who have no fear of God and willfully persist in open rebellion against God and His laws. The way of the righteous is one that is not directed by such counselors. The wisdom of the righteous informs the lifestyle of those blessed by God and they do not live according the wicked ways of the world. The wicked have no influence on the direction of the lives of those who would be blessed by God. So the counsel of the wicked is the first thing the one who is blessed by God is to avoid.

### **Nor Stands in the Way of Sinners**

The second thing the one who is blessed is to avoid is ***standing in the way of sinners***. Sinners are those who have chosen a lifestyle that is habitually marked by practices which the LORD commands to be avoided. Sinners willingly embrace that which the Lord forbids. Sinners delight in what the LORD hates and hate all that in which the LORD delights.

***Standing***, continues a progression away from the way that the Lord blesses and indicates a more fixed position than walking. To stand upon some principle means to adhere to it over a longer period of time. It means making choices that have a longer term effect. This kind of choice also is one that the righteous will avoid. ~~Matthew Henry writes that the righteous,~~

He avoids doing as they do; their way shall not be his way; he will not come into it, much less will he continue in it, as the sinner does, who *sets himself in a way that is not good*, Ps. 36:4.<sup>11</sup>

Not only will he not allow wickedness to influence the direction of his life, neither will he make sin the ground upon which he stands. The righteous will not remain fixed in a position with which sinners would agree with them.

### **Nor Sits in the Seat of Scoffers**

Thirdly, the way of the righteous is to avoid ***sitting in the seat of scoffers***. Being seated continues and furthers the progression, and can have the connotation of being completed and finished as we see in the New Testament when we that Christ is seated—meaning all of his atoning work is completely finished and nothing more, by way of atonement, is to be done.

#### **Heb 10:11-14 (ESV)**

**11** And every priest stands daily at his service, offering repeatedly the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins. **12** But when Christ had offered for all time a single sacrifice for sins, he sat down at the right hand of God, **13** waiting from that time until his enemies should be made a footstool for his feet. **14** For by a single offering he has perfected for all time those who are being sanctified.

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<sup>10</sup> D. R. W. Wood and I. Howard Marshall, *New Bible Dictionary*, 3rd ed. (Leicester, England; Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1996), 1238.

<sup>11</sup> Matthew Henry, *Matthew Henry's Commentary on the Whole Bible: Complete and Unabridged in One Volume* (Peabody: Hendrickson, 1994), Ps 1:1–3.

If this is what the psalmist has in mind, then he is saying that the one blessed by the LORD will never finally remain in a fixed position of **scoffing** (NASB, ESV), or **mocking** (NIV), or **scorn** (KJV). The scoffer is one who sits in a lofty seat and is puffed up by pride.

**Proverbs 21:24 (ESV)**

**24** “Scoffer” is the name of the arrogant, haughty man who acts in arrogant pride.

The scoffer looks down in arrogance upon the people of the LORD. Such people hold nothing sacred,<sup>12</sup> all that pertains to holiness and sanctification are held in contempt by them, and they are quite content to mock God Himself and all who stand for His name. A righteous person will happily ‘sit with’ such persons and retain an amicable friendship. The righteous and the scoffer can comfortably sit in the same seat.

The Contemporary English Version provides a good summary and puts it like this,

“God blesses those people  
who refuse evil advice  
and won’t follow sinners  
or join in sneering at God.”

We’ve seen three things that one who is blessed by God does not do. Walking in the counsel of the wicked, standing in the way of sinners, and sitting in the seat of scoffers does not describe the way of the righteous, but what does?

### **The Blessed Person Does Two Things: Delights In & Mediates On God’s Law**

Now the psalmist moves on to two things that the righteous does do. What does the way of righteous look like? The psalmist notes two qualities in particular. The blessed person 1) **delights in the law of the LORD** and 2) **meditates on it day and night**. The blessed one delights and meditates.

**Psalms 1:2 (ESV)**

**2** but his delight is in the law of the LORD,  
and on his law he meditates day and night.

### **The One Who Delights...**

This verse is the heart of this psalm, because it strikes at the root of the difference between the wicked and the righteous, which has to do with that in which they each delight. Delight “(ἡεψδ) expresses all that makes the man of God happy.”<sup>13</sup> It ‘is that which gives one great pleasure, extreme satisfaction, or a high degree of gratification.’<sup>14</sup>

The righteous person delights in the law of the LORD but the wicked delights in sin. The righteous delights in praising God while the wicked delights in scoffing at the Lord and His people. The righteous person takes pleasure in the law of the Lord, but the wicked take pleasure in lawlessness. The righteous are satisfied with doing right, while the wicked cannot sleep unless they have done

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<sup>12</sup> Roger Ellsworth, *Opening Up Psalms*, Opening Up Commentary (Leominster: Day One Publications, 2006), 30.

<sup>13</sup> Willem A. VanGemeren, “Psalms” In , in *The Expositor's Bible Commentary, Volume 5: Psalms, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, Song of Songs*, ed. Frank E. Gaebelin (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1991), 55.

<sup>14</sup> Merriam-Webster Inc., *Merriam-Webster's Collegiate Dictionary*, Eleventh ed. (Springfield, MA: Merriam-Webster, Inc., 2003).

wrong (Prov 4:16). The wicked are those who delight in evil. The wicked, according to Proverbs, are those...

**Proverbs 2:13-14 (ESV)**

**13** *who forsake the paths of uprightness  
to walk in the ways of darkness,*

**14** *who rejoice in doing evil  
and delight in the perverseness of evil,*

This gets at the real test of true character—answering the question, “In what do you delight?” What really pleases you? Do you receive more pleasure in obeying the law of the LORD or in disobeying? Are you more satisfied in righteousness and holiness or in evil and sin? Are you more gratified by doing what is right or what is wrong?

Think about this. Which is it? Do you delight more in what is good or in what is evil?

Think about your pet sins. Do they really bring lasting pleasure and happiness? Do you experience more delight, for a longer period of time, in doing what is right and good or in what is wrong and sinful? Does it feel better to you to obey or disobey? Do you sleep better at night when the day has been filled with obedience or disobedience? Upon which seat does your conscience sit most comfortably, the seat of obedience or disobedience? Upon which path do your feet walk most securely—the way of righteousness or the way of the wicked?

**Delights in the ‘Law of the LORD’**

The one who is blessed by God is the one who delights in the law of the Lord. The word here for ‘law’ is the Hebrew word *tôrâ* (root word *tôrâh* תּוֹרָה)<sup>15</sup> and means “instruction” or “teaching.” The word encompasses more than just the ten commandments, or the Pentateuch, but includes the whole counsel of God’s teaching. It means the entirety of God’s revealed word, which quite simply is the Bible we hold in our hands this morning all of it, Old Testament and New, from Genesis to Revelation.

Some of you may have an aversion to the Old Testament (OT). I pray the Lord will use this series in the Psalms to change that. Do you know every time Jesus quoted Scripture, he quoted from the OT. Of course he did, because that the only Scripture he knew. When Jesus was tempted by Satan he drew strength enough to resist the devil from the word of God recorded in the book of Deuteronomy. There are 45 times in the NT where Jesus quotes from about 20 OT books. Jesus was sustained by and directed by the words of God recorded in OT. Everything Jesus learned about God the Father he learned from reading the OT. From where did Jesus learn about God’s redemptive plan to save Israel and the Gentile nations? Everything Jesus learned about God and His will He learned from the Old Testament. Here’s what Christopher Wright has to say about reading the OT.

I find myself aware that in reading the Hebrew scriptures I am handling something that gives me a closer common link with Jesus than any archaeological artifact could do. For these are the words he read. These were the stories he knew. These were the songs he sang. These were the depths of wisdom and revelation and prophecy that shaped his whole view of “life, the universe and everything.” This is where he found his insights into the mind of his Father God. Above all, this is where he found the shape of his own identity and the goal of his own mission. In short, the

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<sup>15</sup> John E. Hartley, “תּוֹרָה 910” In , in *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament*, ed. R. Laird Harris, Gleason L. Archer, Jr. and Bruce K. Waltke, electronic ed. (Chicago: Moody Press, 1999), 403.

deeper you go into understanding the Old Testament, the closer you come to the heart of Jesus. (After all, Jesus never actually read the New Testament!)<sup>16</sup>

It was the Old Testament which helped Jesus to understand Jesus. Who did he think he was? What did he think he was to do? The answers came from his Bible, the Hebrew scriptures in which he found a rich tapestry of figures, historical persons, prophetic pictures and symbols of worship. And in this tapestry, where others saw only a fragmented collection of various figures and hopes, Jesus saw his own face. His Hebrew Bible provided the shape of his own identity.<sup>17</sup>

All of God's instruction found in the Bible is to be to us a source of spiritual delight. Just listen to words of the psalmist.

**Psalm 119 (ESV)**

**13** *With my lips I declare  
all the rules of your mouth.*

**14** *In the way of your testimonies I delight  
as much as in all riches.*

**16** *I will delight in your statutes;  
I will not forget your word.*

**24** *Your testimonies are my delight;  
they are my counselors. [not the wicked!]*

**46** *I will also speak of your testimonies before kings  
and shall not be put to shame,*

**47** *for I find my delight in your commandments,  
which I love.*

Speaking of the insolent, he writes,

**70** *their heart is unfeeling like fat,  
but I delight in your law.*

**71** *It is good for me that I was afflicted,  
that I might learn your statutes.*

**72** *The law of your mouth is better to me  
than thousands of gold and silver pieces.*

**77** *Let your mercy come to me, that I may live;  
for your law is my delight.*

**92** *If your law had not been my delight,  
I would have perished in my affliction.*

**103** *How sweet are your words to my taste,  
sweeter than honey to my mouth!*

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<sup>16</sup> Christopher Wright, *Knowing Jesus Through the Old Testament*, (IVP Academic, 1995 ) preface, ix.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid., 44.



111 Your testimonies are my heritage forever,  
for they are the joy of my heart.

127 Therefore I love your commandments  
above gold, above fine gold.

143 Trouble and anguish have found me out,  
but your commandments are my delight.

174 I long for your salvation, O LORD,  
and your law is my delight.

I wonder how many of us can honestly say those words about the instruction of the LORD? How many of you can talk about the Bible like that? I think we need the LORD to move our hearts in this direction. Perhaps this should be our daily request as we go to the LORD and cry out to Him in prayer. Perhaps this should be one of the requests that we will collectively pray for at our next prayer gathering on July 18. There were 15 of us who gathered last Wednesday evening for a time of prayer and it was a sweet time. Let's commit to praying into this over the next three weeks, or perhaps even longer—perhaps we pray it continually until the LORD grants this request! Delighting in the law of the LORD is the first thing the blessed man does.

### On His Law He Meditates Day and Night

The second quality of the blessed man is that **he meditates on the law (torah) day and night**. This was the command the LORD gave to Joshua. This was part of my daily Bible reading plan yesterday morning.

#### Joshua 1:8-9 (ESV)

8 This Book of the Law shall not depart from your mouth, but you shall meditate on it day and night, so that you may be careful to do according to all that is written in it. For then you will make your way prosperous, and then you will have good success. 9 Have I not commanded you? Be strong and courageous. Do not be frightened, and do not be dismayed, for the LORD your God is with you wherever you go."

Those are sweet words to a young man stepping into the leadership role over God's covenant people. God is saying to Joshua, "If you want my blessing upon you, your way to be prosperous, and your path to be successful, then don't let my word depart from your mouth and make it the object of your meditation day and night. Don't dream about the popularity of leadership. Don't fantasize about the praise of man or money or power that may come. Meditate on my word day and night. If you keep my word, my law, my teaching, and my instruction before your mind, then I will bless you where ever you go."

The verb 'to meditate' (*hāgāh*) in its basic meaning is "to murmur" or "mutter."<sup>18</sup> Evidently it was the custom as one was contemplating the meaning of Scripture to "read it half out loud in the process of meditation."<sup>19</sup> Perhaps you've done this when you somewhat stumped as to the meaning

<sup>18</sup> Willem A. VanGemeren, "Psalms" In , in *The Expositor's Bible Commentary, Volume 5: Psalms, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, Song of Songs*, ed. Frank E. Gaebelein (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1991), 55.

<sup>19</sup> Herbert Wolf, "467 חָגַח" In , in *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament*, ed. R. Laird Harris, Gleason L. Archer, Jr. and Bruce K. Waltke, electronic ed. (Chicago: Moody Press, 1999), 205.

of a word or a phrase and so you repeat it low and under your breath over and over until you understand the meaning.

### **Meditation (i.e. Muttering) Saved Indy's Life**

Perhaps you remember the Indiana Jones movie the Last Crusade. Indiana's father, played by Sean Connery had been shot in the stomach. The only chance for him to live was for Indiana to succeed where every other man had failed—making it past the first challenge, the giant saw blades guarding the path to the water of life inside the Holy Grail. The first challenge was called the breath of God. The clue from Indy's father's dairy said, "only the penitent man shall pass." Indy walked slowly through the cobwebs muttering to himself, "the penitent man shall pass, the penitent man shall pass." Just the giant saw blades began to roll, Indy realized being penitent meant bowing down and so he ducked just in time to avoid having his head chopped off. A little biblical meditation saved Indy's life.

Repeating a verse over again and again is also a very good way to help in memorization.

### **Psalms 119 (ESV)**

**15** *I will meditate on your precepts  
and fix my eyes on your ways.*

**27** *Make me understand the way of your precepts,  
and I will meditate on your wondrous works.*

**48** *I will lift up my hands toward your commandments, which I love,  
and I will meditate on your statutes.*

**78** *Let the insolent be put to shame,  
because they have wronged me with falsehood;  
as for me, I will meditate on your precepts.*

**97** *Oh how I love your law!  
It is my meditation all the day.*

**148** *My eyes are awake before the watches of the night,  
that I may meditate on your promise.*

The kind of meditation the psalmist has in mind is mentally grabbing hold of one of God's promises or some Scripture and rolling it over again and again in the mind throughout the course of normal daily activity. Part of that process maybe saying it again and again quietly to yourself until the truth of it dawns on you and you are warmed in it's light. This is the kind of clinging to God's word that will bring a blessing.

### **Exposition of the Blessing**

And what exactly does that blessing look like? It is enduring, fruitful, healthy, and prosperous.

### **Psalms 1:3 (ESV)**

**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.*

### **1) Planted By Streams of Water**

The blessing will yield endurance, like an old oak tree firmly planted by a stream that constantly draws water up through its roots which stretch out under the dirt to drink in the life-giving water. The image on a tree is an image of endurance and stability. A tree remains and endures the storms. It is not blown away. It stands firm in the face of mighty winds and remains fixed in the ground. This tree is strong and healthy because it is near **streams of water**. A tree like this is not easily moved.

### **2) That Yields Its Fruit In Its Season**

And since there is a constant and enduring source of water, then in its season, it will be fruitful. The fruit will naturally come. When a fruit tree is properly nourished, then it naturally brings forth fruit when the season is right. Fruit is life-giving and is evidence of life. Fruit is beneficial to people and gives joy to those who planted it and cared for it. Being a fruitful tree is a benefit to mankind and gives great joy to the LORD our Creator.

### **3) And Its Leaf Does Not Wither**

A leafy tree is a healthy tree. A tree whose leaf does not wither is a healthy tree and an enduring tree, but unwithered leaves have the added benefit of providing a constant source of shade. A shade tree is a place of coolness and refuge from the heat of the sun. The burning rays of the sun to a person wandering and lost, can take one's life. However, to a healthy and well-watered tree, the sun is that which gives it life. People who walk in the ways of the LORD are to those seeking refuge from the futile ways of the world, like the cool refuge of a leafy shade-tree.

### **4) And In All He Does, He Prospers**

Does this promise of prosperity mean he will never face adversity and he will always be healthy, wealthy, and wise? It is true that when one is delighting in and meditating on the instruction of the LORD, that you will be walking in a way that is pleasing to the LORD, therefore, you will be walking in a way that the LORD promises to bless. However, we should not ignore the notion of seasons already mentioned. When we think of seasons, we think of times of bounty and times of little; times of abundant rain and times of drought. The way of the righteous will lead through both, but the difference is the leaf will not wither in the season of drought. The tree will not fail during the drought because his roots are watered by unseen streams of spiritual nourishment.

#### **Psalm 34:19 (ESV)**

**19** *Many are the afflictions of the righteous, but the LORD delivers him out of them all.*

The LORD does not deliver the righteous from all afflictions, but through all afflictions. The LORD will not keep afflictions from His people, but He does promise to be with them through them all and safely bring them through.

When the LORD told Joshua that He would give him good success wherever he went (Josh 1:7), that did not mean that he would have no battles to fight. It meant that the LORD was with him to give him victory over all the battles the LORD gave him to fight.

#### **Psalm 119:71-72 (ESV)**

*71 It was good for me that I was afflicted, that I might learn your statutes. 72 The law of your mouth is better to me than thousands of gold and silver pieces.*

The LORD promises to prosper His people when they walk in the way that He has blessed. Though His people are never exempt from seasons of drought, He does promise to sustain them healthily through them.

## The Way of the Wicked

But He does not promise such blessings to the wicked.

### Psalm 1 (ESV)

*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.*

The wicked will not endure the drought like a tree planted by streams of water. The wicked will dry up and be blown away like chaff in the wind. The righteous will stand in the day of judgment, but sinners will fall and so dreadfully terrible will be their fall for it will be a fall from which they will never recover. Sinners will never stand in the congregation of the righteous, for they are not welcomed by the LORD.

The way of the wicked leads to eternal perishing, but the LORD knows the way of the righteous. The word ‘know’ in the OT means much more than to simply ‘be aware of.’ It means to be intimately acquainted with and to care for with affection and approval, just like Adam “knew his wife and she conceived and bore” a son (Gn 4:1).

If you are struggling to put yourself in the category of ‘righteous,’ because all your sin is before your eyes, then all you have to do is read Psalm 32 which was written by David.

### Psalm 32 (ESV)

*[32:1] Blessed is the one whose transgression is forgiven,  
whose sin is covered.  
[2] Blessed is the man against whom the LORD counts no iniquity,  
and in whose spirit there is no deceit.  
[3] For when I kept silent, my bones wasted away  
through my groaning all day long.  
[4] For day and night your hand was heavy upon me;  
my strength was dried up as by the heat of summer. Selah  
[5] I acknowledged my sin to you,  
and I did not cover my iniquity;  
I said, “I will confess my transgressions to the LORD,”  
and you forgave the iniquity of my sin. Selah  
[6] Therefore let everyone who is godly (*i.e. righteous*)  
offer prayer to you at a time when you may be found;  
surely in the rush of great waters,*

- they shall not reach him.
- [7] You are a hiding place for me;  
you preserve me from trouble;  
you surround me with shouts of deliverance. Selah
- [8] I will instruct you and teach you in the way you should go;  
I will counsel you with my eye upon you.
- [9] Be not like a horse or a mule, without understanding,  
which must be curbed with bit and bridle,  
or it will not stay near you.
- [10] Many are the sorrows of the wicked,  
but steadfast love surrounds the one who trusts in the LORD.
- [11] Be glad in the LORD, and rejoice, O righteous,  
and shout for joy, all you upright in heart!

The righteous are those who look to the Lord for forgiveness of sin, not those who have no sin. The righteous are those who go to the LORD to *confess* their sin, rather than trying to *hide* their sin. The righteous are those who trust in the LORD. The righteous are those who delight in the LORD and in His teaching.

The way of the wicked will perish, but the LORD knows the way of the righteous. May the Lord grant us heart that delight in Him and in His word and this summer may be meditate on it day and night.

**Proverbs 4:14-19 (ESV)**

- [14] *Do not enter the path of the wicked,  
and do not walk in the way of the evil.*
- [15] *Avoid it; do not go on it;  
turn away from it and pass on.*
- [16] *For they cannot sleep unless they have done wrong;  
they are robbed of sleep unless they have made someone stumble.*
- [17] *For they eat the bread of wickedness  
and drink the wine of violence.*
- [18] *But the path of the righteous is like the light of dawn,  
which shines brighter and brighter until full day.*
- [19] *The way of the wicked is like deep darkness;  
they do not know over what they stumble.*