

Psalm 1, as a fitting introduction to the Psalter, presents the only two ways of life: a way of blessing—true worship, spiritual vitality, and eternal happiness—or the way of the ungodly, which will lead to judgment and eternal separation from God. This Psalm is an appeal to choose the first and a warning to reject the latter. It does so with three pairs of contrasts.

I. Contrast 1: the basic heart attitudes and lifestyles (1–2)

1. *The desires of the ungodly heart are contrary to that of the blessed, righteous person.*
 - a. The blessed have a happiness that arises from a sense of spiritual well-being.
 - b. The blessed disassociate themselves from the ungodly: they do not follow the advice of those who reject God; they do not practice the lifestyle of those who disobey God; they do not adopt the attitude of those who actively belittle righteousness (cf. Proverbs 9:7–8; 13:1; 14:6; 15:12; 24:9).
2. *The contrasting heart desire of the blessed, righteous person is for God’s truth, a delight which expresses itself in constant meditation (1:2).*
 - a. The law of the LORD, the Torah, is in this context all of Scripture, and as illustrated in the rest of the Psalms includes revelation concerning the nature of God and how we relate to Him.
 - b. Throughout his/her waking hours, the person who is blessed ponders the Word, reflecting on its counsel and its prescription for living and attitudes. Meditating is not a mere repetition of words or phrases (Matthew 6:7), but seeking to apply the Word to all life’s situations (cf. Deuteronomy 6:7).

II. Contrast 2: the resulting vitality of the spiritual lives (3–4)

1. *The blessed, godly person is illustrated with a tree.*
 - a. This person/tree has been strategically planted.
 - b. This person/tree is constantly nourished. God by His Spirit and through His Word graciously gives all that is needed to remain strong and to grow. Cf. John 4:13; 7:37–39.
 - c. At the appropriate time this person/tree produces fruit, a product of its nourishment and unique character.
 - d. Even in difficult times, this person/tree is sustained.
 - e. This person will prosper, because God’s desires has shaped his/her own desires and activities. Cf. Psalm 37:4; Philippians 2:12–13.
2. *The godless person is compared to chaff.*
 - a. Chaff is the useless, rootless outer hull of grain that is blown away in winnowing.
 - b. The wicked may have the appearance of success (Psalm 37:7; 73:3; Jeremiah 12:1), but “chaff” is God’s evaluation of them and pictures as well their final destiny.

III. Contrast 3: the ultimate, eternal destinies (5–6)

1. *The rootless, useless character of the ungodly will be revealed when all must stand before God.*
 - a. The ungodly will have nothing to support them before God. They cannot rise to challenge God.
 - b. The ungodly will be excluded from those who can stand before God.
2. *The lifestyles and lives of both the godly and ungodly will be properly rewarded by God.*
 - a. The Lord approves and watches over the lives of the righteous.
 - b. The ungodly will perish. They and all their attempts to rule their own lives will come to nothing.

The Pharisees mistakenly reduced the Law to commands to be kept and missed the Bible’s revelation of Jesus Christ. But Jesus said that the Old Testament Scriptures witnessed to Him and that by coming to Him a person could have life (John 5:39–40). To meditate on God’s Word, the Bible, is to review constantly a revelation of God in Jesus Christ and then to grow in our understanding and appreciation of His goodness and His holiness. The more we grasp His holiness, the more we realize the need for His goodness. And the more we embrace the His goodness, the more we respond in kind to His holiness.

Being nourished on Christ as revealed in His Word is the answer to spiritual dryness. Coming to Christ relieves spiritual thirst, stills spiritual hunger, lifts spiritual burdens, restores spiritual vitality. He is the Way of the righteous and those who are known by Him will never perish.

For further thought and discussion:

- How might you be tempted to heed the advice of those who reject God or to adopt their lifestyle? According to this Psalm what is an effective counter-measure?
- What could help you bring God’s Word to bear on all your life?
- How would you evaluate the spiritual vitality of your own life: dry and brittle or healthy, growing, and fruitful? In what ways are you growing in your knowledge of and relationship to Jesus?
- What will you do today to deepen that knowledge and relationship?