

Psalms 1:1-6

The psalmist compare and contrasts the godly and the wicked and notes the eventual end of each.

This first Psalm stands as a kind of introduction to the rest of the Psalms. Its subject matter is very general and basic, but it touches on two subjects that continually occur throughout the Psalms. It declares the blessedness of the righteous and the misery and future of the wicked.

Man's spiritual life is set forth negatively and positively, inwardly and externally, figuratively and literally. Above all else, it summarizes all that is to follow in the rest of the Psalms, and, for that matter, in the rest of Scripture.

It presents two ways of life: the way of the righteous and the way of the wicked. However, the key subject is the centrality of God's Word to the life and fruitfulness of the righteous who truly love His Word. Two great thrusts flow out of this: (a) the importance and absolute necessity of the Scripture, and (b) the changed character, stability, and fruitfulness it promises to those who make Scripture the core of their lives.

Note how this Psalm drives home its truth by the use of contrasts.

(1) There is the way of the godly and their blessedness in contrast to the way of the ungodly (1:1-6).

(2) The way of the godly is set forth by way of a contrast: negatively, what the godly do not do (1:1), and positively, what the godly do (1:2).

(3) Then there is the contrast between the results of the two ways of life; the godly are stable and fruitful, but the ungodly are unstable and face sure judgment. Here is a contrast between character and destiny.

I. The godly. V. 1-3

a. The Contrast v. 1-2

1. What they do not do. V. 1

a. Follow the advice of the wicked.

b. Stand around with sinners.

c. Join in with scoffers.

2. What they do. V. 2 They delight in the law of the Lord.

b. The Comparison v. 3 They are like fruitful, well-watered trees.

There are three things the man who is blessed must avoid. But let's first note how the author develops this because it is so instructive and is a warning in itself. As it is presented, it demonstrates the process of *retrogression*, which always occurs when men are not advancing in God's words and way of life. We never stand still! Verse one portrays this truth in three degrees of degeneration, each a little more permanent, settled, and embedded into one's life.

(1) There are three degrees of *habit* or *conduct*: walk / stand / sit.

(2) There are three degrees of *openness*, *fellowship*, or *involvement* in evil: counsel / path / seat.

(3) There are three degrees of *evil* that result: wicked / sinners / scoffers.

In each of these there is regression from God's way and progression into sin and Satan's way. It warns us how man is prone to turn aside little by little and become more and more entangled in the web of sin. He is easily influenced by the way of the world in its attitudes and actions, for actions follow attitudes.

II. **The Godless (1:4-6):** The Lord protects the godly, but the wicked are worthless chaff who will one day be condemned and destroyed.

“And he shall be like a tree”

Please note, this is a promise from God and a well established fact of life. A Bible that is worn and falling apart from use usually belongs to someone who isn't.

Being like a tree is of course a metaphor, a picture. But what does this picture teach us?

(1) A tree has deep roots and is usually very sturdy, especially when compared to a tumble weed. A tree portrays stability and the capacity to withstand the storms of life (Jer. 17:5-8). It's the picture of mental, emotional, and spiritual stability in every kind of situation (see Phil. 4:11f).

(2) It also pictures the concept of growth and time. As it takes time to produce a huge sprawling oak, so it takes time to grow and mature in the Word. The problem, especially in our 'instant tea' society, we want and expect an overnight transformation and change. But true spiritual strength comes from a long-term, established relationship with God in his Word (Hebrew 5:11ff; 1 Pet. 2:2; 2 Pet. 3:18).

(3) It also pictures ministry. If a tree is a fruit tree, it gives fruit. If it is an oak, it gives shade. God has given us His Word that we might become fruitful trees in His service and in ministry to others.

2 Timothy 3:16-17. All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness; that the man of God may be adequate, equipped for every good work.

“Firmly planted by streams of water”

“Planted” is a participle of the Hebrew verb. This verb actually means “to transplant,” not merely “plant.” This is rich and significant. “To plant” means to cause to take root, to become firmly established for the purpose of stability, nutrition (food and water), growth, and eventually production.

“Which yields its fruit in its season”

Note again the recurring biblical principle: First the root, then fruit. First the word with obedience and application, and then there is production. (Note the fruit-bearing power of the gospel in Colossians 1:5b-7; 2:6, and then note the emphasis in verses 9f on the need of prayer.)

“Which yields” is, “to give.” The verb is the imperfect tense, which stresses continual action, or even that which, given the inherent power of Scripture, is always true as a general rule of life. As 1 Thessalonians 2:13 reminds us, constantly living in the Word should result in continued fruitfulness if there has been an open ear to hear what God is saying. How much fruit each tree yields depends on several factors:

(1) The filling of the Holy Spirit or the abiding life (John 15:1-7; Gal. 5:22-23)

(2) One's level of maturity (1 John 2:12, 13; Heb. 5:11-13).

(3) One's particular gifts (1 Pet. 4:10-12).

(4) God's own special blessing and use of our gifts (1 Cor. 3:6-7).

(5) The conditions in which we labor, the preparedness of the soil (Mk. 4:14-20; John 4:37-38).

“But they are like the chaff which the wind drives away”

The conjunction “but” is a strengthened form in the Hebrew text and is somewhat emphatic. It draws our attention to the difference between the righteous and wicked.

“Like chaff.” “Chaff” is the Hebrew word *mox*. Chaff is the seed covering and the debris separated from the grain or seed in threshing. Unlike the grain or actual seed, it has no body or substance and is blown about by the wind, always unstable. It is that which is worthless, of no value. It draws the reader's attention to both the uselessness of the wicked and to the ease with which God deals with them, like the wind that so easily picks up the chaff and blows it away.

Like chaff, the wicked will be separated from the grain in judgment (vs. 5). For a similar idea compare the wheat and tares (Matt. 13:24-42). The unrighteous are ultimately worthless to God and generally worthless to society since they corrupt and feed on others. Primarily they are unstable, blown about from pillar to post because they have no spiritual roots in the Word of God (cf. Eph. 4:14; Jer. 17:6).

While genuine believers cannot lose their salvation, there is the danger of living like the unrighteous (the wicked) in carnal indifference, perhaps very religious, but out of fellowship with God. The church in Corinth is an illustration of this. Paul warned them that in their state of carnality and failure to grow, they were walking like mere men (1 Cor. 3:1-4). Such believers may act like the wicked in many ways. In their carnality they become unrestrained and impoverished in their spiritual lives. If this continues, it will mean severe discipline in this life followed by forfeiture of rewards in heaven, like chaff which the wind drives away (1 Cor. 3:12f).

“Therefore the wicked will not stand in the judgment”

“Will not stand.” The verb here is *qWm*, “rise, arise, stand.” It looks at standing as the result of rising up. The idea in this context is that of ability to withstand or endure the judgment of God. Unbelievers will face God at the great white throne judgment but will not be able to stand its test (Matt. 22:11-13). Only those (both Jews and Gentiles) who have the robe of Christ’s righteousness because of their faith in Christ can stand before God’s throne.

In the progress of revelation, the Old Testament does not give us the details of the last judgments as does the New Testament. The Old Testament spoke of the time of the Tribulation (the time of Jacob’s trouble or Daniel’s 70th week), of a last judgment, and of the gathering of the righteous before God. But for the complete picture we need New Testament revelation. There are five future judgments with regard to mankind:

(1) The Judgment Seat of Christ, the Bema. The judgment of the Bema follows the rapture. It involves only the church, the body of Christ. It is an examination for rewards or loss of rewards in heaven, i.e., forfeiture of privileges of service (Rom. 8:1; John 5:24; Rom. 14:10-11; 1 Cor. 3:11-15; 2 Cor. 5:9-10).

(2) Tribulation Judgments: Also known as Jacob’s trouble and Daniel’s 70th week. (Rev. 6-19; 1 Thess. 5:1-11; 2 Thess. 2:1-12; Matt. 24; Isa. 24). The Tribulation begins after the rapture, thus it begins only with unbelievers. The purpose of the Tribulation judgments is to purge out the rebels and bring Israel to the Messiah.

(3) Judgment of living Jews (Matt. 25:1-30). This judgment comes at the end of the Tribulation and is carried out by Christ on earth. Unbelievers are separated from believers and the believers go into the Millennium.

(4) Judgment of living Gentiles (Mat. 25:31-46). This judgment also comes at the end of the Tribulation and is carried out by Christ on earth. Unbelievers are separated from believers and the believers go into the Millennium.

(5) The Great White Throne Judgment (Rev. 20). This refers to the judgment of all unbelieving dead or those raised in the resurrection for judgment (see John 5:29). It follows the thousand-year reign of Christ and pertains only to unbelievers. Because they do not have Christ’s righteousness, they are cast into the lake of fire.