

# *The Righteous and the Wicked*

*Psalm 1:1-3*

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<sup>1</sup> *How blessed is the man who does not walk  
in the counsel of the wicked,  
Nor stand in the path of sinners,  
Nor sit in the seat of scoffers!*

<sup>2</sup> *But his delight is in the law of the LORD,  
And in His law he meditates day and night.*

<sup>3</sup> *He will be like a tree firmly planted by streams of water,  
Which yields its fruit in its season  
And its leaf does not wither;  
And in whatever he does, he prospers.*

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The first phrase in verse 1 is a common phrase that is often seen, particularly in the Poetic books of the OT. It begins with couplet “How blessed is...”. The word “Blessed” appears 45 times in the OT and in the NT (as opposed to the NT) speaks of happiness or a blessing in the sense gaining something that is very welcome. This is a bit different than the NT sense which speaks of the idea of becoming more like our Heavenly Father Who is the “Blessed One”. Jesus says that there a number of “be-attitudes” (Matthew 5:3ff) that speak of the believer becoming, because of the adapting of these qualities, more and more like the Father.

That seems not to be the meaning meant in the OT, at least not here. It is actually intended to stimulate thought on the part of David’s readers.

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It is pretty much a rhetorical question, that is a question that has what the writer considers to be a question with an obvious or given answer. It seems that David considers the answer here to a resounding “Very”!

David is suggesting for us that there is an effect tie between walking in a holy fashion and taking delight in the Law of the Lord (v2). “man”, of course is not speaking of males, but of those belonging mankind, any person in general. It is a given that the “man” in view is or will be a blessed servant of God. What David concentrates on here is just “why” this obvious and given thing is so true. He gives 3 negative reasons and two positive ones before telling us what the result of this blessedness with be.

1. **The first negative reason** is that **he does not walk in the counsel of the wicked.**

- “Walk” speaks of the path or way someone goes in his habit of living. So, here it is speaking the habits and choices that one makes on a regular basis that, together, comprise his life. The implication here is that this “walking” is a deliberate set of decisions and choices. This is coupled with a negative particle that, obviously, causes it bring the walking to mind, but in the sense that one does not walk or make choices in such a fashion as the habit of their life, the way they choose to live.
  - Interestingly, it is the “counsel of the wicked” that this one does NOT walk in. “Counsel” is a fairly common word in the OT, but is virtually always used to speak of the counsel “of God”. Of course, in that sense it is speaking of the instruction contained in the Word of God regarding what He desires His people to do.
  - And so, the “counsel” of the wicked would be such similar “instruction”, but from the enemies of God and would be contrary to what God desires. It is NOT the directed influence of Satan upon the one in view. It is the influence and effect of the surrounding people, unredeemed people that is in view here.
    - It is this “counsel”, that is what we could call the instruction for living our lives that comes from the wicked around us that David is telling that we ought not follow after.
2. **As a second negative reason**, David tells us to be sure that we **do not “stand” in the “path of sinners”**.
- “Nor” is a particle that functions a bit like a conjunction, tying two pieces of a passage or verse together.
    - Here it sets the first part of verse 1 in conjunction with the second part of the verse, but underscores the second as a similar “kind” behavior that David is telling us is not acceptable.
    - “Standing” has to do with remaining in an established position. It speaks of a cessation of movement or motion.
    - The implication that the position one is in when one is “standing” is acceptable and even wanted.
    - In this context, it is a position that was arrived at via effort or moving along the path described before.
    - The sinners had walked the path that they had walked and when they came to an acceptable place, a place pleasing to them, they stopped and stood still there.
  - The two negatives complement one another.
    - David tells us that we must never guide our path the way sinners tells us ought to the way to walk.
    - Secondly, it is imperative that we never select our “stopping and standing” place from on that way.
3. The **Third Negative Reason** in this Marvelous Chapter moves from walking, to standing, to **sitting in the seat of scoffers**.

- This section starts with “nor” once again with the same connecting properties. It sets what follows in the same thought train but makes it negative.
- “Sin” is a very interesting word. In general, it to dwell, remain, sit, or to abide. It can mean to sit or sit down; to take one’s comfort at a location. It can also be translated “to be set, to remain, or to stay”. When speaking in a larger, more general sense we see it rendered “to dwell, or have one’s abode”. It is in the perfect voice which points, in complement to the two negatives before, to just how one got the place of “sitting”. Thus we see it as the completion or manifestation of the walking in the wrong path, and standing at some undesirable point along that path.
- David’s point here is that what follows the prior two ultimately leads to scorn of the counsel of God in favor of the counsel of the wicked. Whereas they chose to follow a path that dishonored and did not obey God; then at some point chose to remain and set up camp (so to speak) at a given spot. We now see the deeper and personal aspect of what he sees happening and is warning against. Such behavior and choices inevitably leads to one scoffing at what God has asked of His people.
- The word “scoff” take in a number of verbal behaviors that David (and Solomon both) tells us are both undesirable and detestable. To fail to follow after a godly path, and, in following, to stand in a godly and God honoring place in life, cast scorn in the face of the God whose servant we are.
  - It implies an active taking of such action and thus speaks of one who allows his life choices and his place in the “path” that his life has taken to end up, instead of being one who glorifies God, being one who is the juxtaposed opposite, a mocker and scorner of all that God’s counsel declares is the way that He desires all of those who are His to take.
  - Notice also that implication here is that this must be understood as deliberate and purposeful, at least at the beginning, “walking” stage as well as the “standing” stage. One cannot walk by accident or as a mechanism with no self-control. It is deliberate and taken by choice. Likewise with the action of stopping along that walk to take up a “standing” position. While one is walking, stopping and standing cannot be seen as accidental.
  - We might also see the action of “sitting” to speak of this deliberate and purposeful act of will. Choice must be here to move from standing to sitting. This is NOT a fall or a slide.
- On the other hand, the mocking and scoffing, if seen to be a matter of testimony to the wicked, the way they see and interpret the meaning of the life the one they are viewing; might well be

something unintended by the one walking, stopping and sitting. They can indeed end up be a thing that mock, scoffs and tells the world around them that God is not One to be treated seriously or seen as One that must be submitted to.

Verses 2 and 3 take us to the “Positive” reasons why the man in verse one is said to be “happy” or “blessed”.

1. **The first positive reason** is that **he “delights in the Law of the Lord”**.
  - The “Law of the Lord” obviously speaks of the revelation of God and the non-optional requirement that it has on men. God has given the revelation of His character and being to men. David says that another cause for the godly man to be blessed is for and by his LOVE for that Word of God.
  - The Revelation of God tells the reader of God’s person, His nature, of what He has done and accomplished for His people. It tells of His promises and of His faithfulness to those who bear His name. It tells of the depth of relational fellowship that the son of God experiences with His Heavenly Father.
  - In many ways it is similar to the relationship of husband and wife as they grow in their knowledge of one another and come to know one another as time passes. They become more and more fond of each other and what they come to know of each other become the very things that deepen their dedication each other. Humanly, this is referred to as love, and, perhaps, the best thing that two people can do for one another, is move forward in their depth of love for one another.
  - Likewise, we are to love God and to grow in our love for Him. The Scripture is clear that one way we can do so is to love his Word (referred to as “His Law” here). This is spoken of as “delight” here in verse 3. The word speaks of the taking a great pleasure. It isn’t just liking but really, really taking pleasure in a given thing. As with many of these kinds of Hebrew words, there is the sense of a deliberate and particular taking of the delight in a pleasurable thing.
  - The idea is that this one has CHOSEN to place his attention upon, and in the taking pleasure in the item or process involved in the reading and studying of the Law.
2. **The second positive reason** is that it is **in that Law that he meditates day and night!**
  - This takes the above idea a step further. It is a very understanding idea, but once again, it is a deliberate and purposeful process. One might imply that, because he has delighted in the law, and it gives him pleasure, he then goes further and spend a goodly amount of time in it, meditating and thus learning what it has to say in a greater and greater depth.

- As we had mentioned the parallel to marriage earlier, we can think of that in this illustration as well. As the husband and wife spend time with each other, and thus grow in their delight and love for each other, so also does the believer, by spending time pondering the law and growing in his love and in his knowledge of it.
  - The implication here is that this is a thing that God both approves of and that He desires for His people to pursue.
3. **The third positive reason we find in verse 3 which speaks of a blessed result to consider - **he flourishes in his pathway through life.****

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*He will be like a tree firmly planted by streams of water,  
Which yields its fruit in its season  
And its leaf does not wither;  
And in whatever he does, he prospers.*

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- The ideas put forth here is that the love and meditation mentioned just prior has an effect, one that is both acceptable and desirable to God.
  - We remember that God is, several times, portrayed as a vineyard owner. This picture would thus be one that demonstrates a good and right growth in that which the owner has seen produced. “tree” can speak of any kind of growth planted for what it will produce.
  - Here, the “planter” put this thing in the ground near a plentiful source of water to encourage and feed its maturing.
  - As a result, it produces the desired fruit for which it was planted.
  - As any farmer, or vineyard owner would know and expect, it produces the fruit for which it is intended, doing so when it is intended.
- This is, David says, exactly what God will do in the life of those who love His Law and meditate upon it and it serves as both a reason and a cause why they are blessed by God.
- We note that **a second, tangential idea** here is that the fruit of the “tree” here is such that it will never wither:

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*.And its leaf does not wither;  
And in whatever he does, he prospers.*

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- Because it was originally planted near rivers of water, it has an abundant source of what it needs to stay nice and green and healthy.
  - You and I face all many of discouraging and very trying things throughout our lives.

- His point is that the “Law” or the Word of God serves as an inexhaustible source of what is always needed (and desperately needed at times).
- Interestingly, the “abundant provision” idea extends also to the idea that there is prosperity in the pursuit and in the accomplishment of the activities the child of God takes to do for the Lord.
  - The implication is that it is God and not our own efforts that provide the ability to do such things.
  - The Word of God is our source for these pursuits and we must be certain that we never fail to remember and take action on this teaching.
- We note also that this is both deliberate and appears to be continual or ongoing.
  - It is NOT simply a matter of reading on occasion or even regularly.
  - David says that a matter of delighting in it and of meditating upon it is what brings forth the fruit that God desires for His Law to produce in our lives.
- We must note that there is another implication here, and that is that flourishing and bringing forth productive fruit CANNOT happen apart from this delighting and meditating upon the Law of God.
  - It is not simply a matter of hearing it, or reading it.
  - We must take it in as that which we delight in and then meditate (or study it) upon it.

We cannot and will not grow and bear fruit unless we give ourselves over to this process.