

"Psalm 1: The Way of the Righteous and the Wicked" Psalm 1

The psalmist describes the blessed one who leads an untarnished and prosperous life in accord with the word of the Lord, and contrasts the wicked who shall perish.

Psalms Bible Study: Evening

Week 1 Intro & Psalm 1

Week 2 Psalm 2

(Skip a week)

Week 3 Psalm 63

Week 4 Psalm 23

Week 5 *Psalms of Ascent, Hallel Psalms, Psalm 150, Praise & Worship*

Introduction to the Psalms – a brief overview and introduction to the Book of Psalms

- The term psalm means "melody"
- It's POERTY!
- It's MUSIC!

Each psalm has order & structure just like other poems and songs.

Types of music familiar to us:

- Jazz, Rock, R&B, Soul
- Gospel, Blues, Classical, Country
- Reggae, Pop, Rap, Hip Hop, Latino

Types of psalms: see handout

- Individual (39%)
- Hymns of Praise (21%)
- Communal (18%)
- Instructional (15%)
- Royal (7%)

Parallelism: the key to understanding the psalms: see handout

Arrangement of Psalms

- Introduction: 1-2
- Book One: 3-41
- Book Two: 42-72
- Book Three: 73-89

- Book Four: 90-106
- Book Five: 107-145
- Conclusion: 146-150

*Marker = Blessed...Everlasting...Amen

Musical terms throughout

- Chief Musician
- Arrangement; Lightly
- Choir, Soprano
- Strings; Octave
- Crescendo; Pause; Vibrate
- Psalm, Song, Poem, Praise, etc.

Musical instruments throughout

- Trumpet, harp, lyre
- Timbrel, stringed instruments, pipe
- Loud cymbals, resounding cymbals
- All of these in Psalm 150 alone!

- The Psalms are an inspired collection of Hebrew poetry and songs that arise out of experiences with which we can all identify.
- Psalms arose from real people wishing to express themselves during times of prosperity, adversity, holiness, sinfulness, despair, joy, thanksgiving, praise, worship.

Praise and Worship are two major themes seen throughout the Psalter.

- Praise extols God's actions & attributes
- Worship reminds us of our proper place under God ("to bow down")

"In any area of life one naturally praises what one appreciates; in fact, the praise is part of the enjoyment. It does not matter whether it is sports, flowers, sunsets, children, cars, great books, or anything else. To enjoy something fully one must speak of it."

—C.S. Lewis, *Reflections in the Psalms*

Psalms Importance to OT:

- Inspired Backgrounds (Psalm 3, e.g.)
- "Richer" insights of life with the Lord

Psalms Importance to NT:

- 50% of the OT quotes in the NT are from the Psalms
- "Speaking to one another in psalms, hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody with your heart to the Lord" (Eph. 5:19)

Psalm 1

- Serves as the Introduction to the Psalms
- Sets the “tone” by contrasting two major themes seen throughout the Psalms...
 - the way of the righteous who are guided by the Word of God
 - the way of the wicked (ungodly) that proves worthless, vain and temporary
- Wisdom Psalm
- Characteristics of wisdom literature:
 - Contrasts righteous & wicked
 - Fear of the Lord/Love for the Law
 - Inevitability of retribution
 - Use of simile (like or as)
 - “Blessed” formula
 - Terms (way, know, righteous, wicked, Law, meditation, prosper, scorner, etc.)

As a piece of wisdom literature Psalm 1 not only instructs people to obey the Word of God, but demonstrates the wisdom in doing so, and the utter folly of living a life apart from it.

- Message:
 - The psalmist describes the blessed one who leads an untarnished and prosperous life in accord with the word of the Lord, and contrasts the wicked who shall perish.
- 1 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!
 - 2 But his delight is in the law of the LORD, and in His law he meditates day and night.
 - 3 And 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.
 - 4 The wicked are not so, but they are like chaff which the wind drives away.
 - 5 Therefore the wicked will not stand in the judgment, nor sinners in the assembly of the righteous.
 - 6 For the LORD knows the way of the righteous, but the way of the wicked will perish.

Psalm 1 outline

- I. The Way of the Righteous (1-3)**
- II. The Way of the Wicked (4)**
- III. The Judgment (5-6)**

I. The Way of the Righteous (1-3)

A. The person who leads an untarnished life is blessed (1).

1. Announcement of blessing (1a)
2. Three qualifications of the blessed (1b-d)

How blessed is the man...

- "right, straight, spiritually joyful"

Blessed ("asher") = the conditions and situation of the one who is right with God and the pleasure and satisfaction that is derived from that.

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!

3. Three qualifications of the blessed" (1b-d)

- Not **walk** in the **counsel** of the **wicked**
- Nor **stand** in the **path** of **sinners**
- Nor **sit** in the **seat** of **scoffers**

Note the trilogy of connections between the

- **People:** **wicked/sinners/scoffers**
- **Actions:** **walk/stand/sit**
- **Involvement:** **counsel/path/seat**

Note the increased intensity in each

WALK	COUNSEL	WICKED
STAND	PATH	SINNERS
SIT	SEAT	SCOFFERS

WARNING: the point of the trilogy is to show that if one begins by taking the advice of the unbeliever, he will move to consider that way, and after a while be so much a part of it that he will be named among the scornors of the faith.

B. The person who lives an untarnished life follows God's instructions (2).

But his delight is in the law of the LORD, and in His law he meditates day and night.

1. Strong contrast

- 1:1 = FLEE
- 1:2 = PURSUIT

2. Focus = Word of God (Torah)

3. "Delight" = not burdensome; desire
4. "Meditates" = deep inner thoughts
 - "Hagah" sounds like muttering

C. The person who follows God's word will have success in this life (3).

And 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.

1. Simile of the tree (3)
2. Characteristics of the tree (3a-d)
 - Firmly planted (3a)
 - Well watered = Growth (3b)
 - Regularly fruitful = Productive (3c)
 - Regularly active = Persistence (3d)
3. Statement of fact: Prosperity (3e)
 - No more simile = reality
 - "Prosper" = living in accord with God's word and will...
 - "thrive, advance, success"

II. The Way of the Wicked (4)

A. The life of the ungodly is worthless (4)

The wicked are not so, but they are like chaff which the wind drives away.

1. Strong contrast with 1:4
2. 1:4a – ungodly: not like the righteous
 - Growing/Producing/Persisting
3. 1:4b – ungodly: like chaff
 - contrasts with the firm tree in 3a
 - Light, worthless husks separated from the food grain through winnowing.
4. Contrasts between Righteous/Wicked
 - Solid – Impermanent
 - Productive – Unproductive

Life is lived in futility if its fundamental purpose is never discovered.

III. The Judgment (5-6)

A. The wicked (ungodly) will not survive the judgment (5).

Therefore the wicked will not stand in the judgment, nor sinners in the assembly of the righteous.

1. This is why the wicked "will not stand"
 - Contrasted with "firmly planted" in 3a
 - Because the ungodly do not draw from the Word of God and flourish like the righteous, the ungodly will not be left standing at the judgment (they will not survive it).

- 1 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!
- 2 But his delight is in the law of the LORD, and in His law he meditates day and night.
- 3 And 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.
- 4 The wicked are not so, but they are like chaff which the wind drives away.
- 5 Therefore the **wicked will not stand** in the judgment, nor sinners in the assembly of the righteous.
- 6 For the LORD knows the way of the righteous, but the way of the wicked will perish.

B. The righteous will be saved (6a)

C. The wicked will perish (6b)

For the LORD knows the way of the righteous, but the way of the wicked will perish.

1. Why?
 - Because YHWH knows their "way"
 - Their faith & course of life

D. The way of the wicked will be their ruination (6b).

For the LORD knows the way of the righteous, but the way of the wicked will perish.

Psalm 1

Two Types of People

Two Ways

Two Destinies

And he will be like a tree firmly planted by streams of water...

CLASSIFICATION OF PSALMS

I. *HYMNS OF PRAISE*, (31 Psalms)

1. *Hymns Proper*: 8, 19, 29, 33, 100, 103-104, 111, 113-114, 117, 135, 136, 145-150. Contains responsories, "Amen," "Hallelujah." etc.
2. *Psalms of the Lord's Enthronement or Kingship*: 47, 93, 96-99
3. *Songs of Zion*: 46, 48, 76, 84, 122, 132. (extolling Zion or Jerusalem)

Characteristic elements:

- a. Introduction or Call to Worship, e.g., "Praise the Lord."
- b. Body of hymn describing God's acts or attributes.
- c. Conclusion, calling for renewed praise or obedience.

II. *INDIVIDUAL LAMENTS, EXPRESSIONS OF CONFIDENCE IN GOD OR THANKSGIVING*. (58)

1. *Individual Laments*: 5-7, 13, 17, 22, 25-26, 28, 31, 35-36, 38-39, 42-43, 51, 54-57, 59, 61, 63-64, 69-71, 86, 88, 120, 130, 140-143.
2. *Individual Confidences Expressed*: 3-4, 11, 16, 23, 27, 62, 121, 131.
3. *Individual Thanksgiving*: 9-10, 30, 32, 34, 40-41, 92, 107, 116, 138.

Characteristic Elements of Laments:

- a. Address to God and cry for help.
- b. Complaint often expressed in figures.
- c. Confession of trust.
- d. Petition for the Lord's help.
- e. Appeal to God's special care or covenant promise.
- f. Vow of praise and thanksgiving.
- g. Confidence of God's answer.

III. *COMMUNITY LAMENTS, CONFIDENCES, OR THANKSGIVING*. (27)

1. *COMMUNITY LAMENTS*: 12, 44, 58, 60, 74, 77, 79-80, 82-83, 85, 90, 94, 106, 108, 123, 126, 137.
2. *Community Confidence Expressed*: 115, 125, 129.
3. *Community Thanksgiving*: 65-68, 118, 124.

Characteristic elements or form similar to the individual groupings.

IV. *ROYAL PSALMS*: (of Israel's Temporal King, looking to the Eternal King). (11)

1. *Royal Marriage*: 45.
2. *Coronations*: 2, 72, 101, 110.
3. *Battle Songs*: of prayer or praise: 18, 20-21, 89, 144

Presented in various forms.

V. *INSTRUCTION OR DIDACTIC PSALMS*. (23)

1. *Wisdom Psalms*: 1, 37, 49, 73, 91, 112, 119, 127-128, 133, 139.
2. *Historical Psalms*: 78, 105.
3. *Prophetic Exhortation*: 14, 50, 52-53, 75, 81, 95.
4. *Liturgies*: 15, 24, 134.

Characteristic elements of teaching such as proverbs, exhortations, historical reflections, contrasts of the righteous and the wicked, and reminders of the "blessed."

Source: Leopold Sabourin, *The Psalms: Their Origin and Meaning* as quoted by Stanley A. Ellisen, *Knowing God's Word*

. . . Not for Christians?

by Buck Anderson

Meditation. The word probably brings to mind a dimly lit, incense-filled room. On the floor sit several dedicated disciples in what must be very uncomfortable positions. Together, hoping to become "one" with their god, they incessantly chant their secret mantra: "Ommm." "Ommm." "Ommm."

No Christian wants anything to do with the scene just described. We know the one true God is reached only through the "one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus" (1 Tim. 2:5, NIV). We recognize that any attempt to reach God outside of Christ is pagan. Regardless of the sincerity and dedication of the people involved, regardless of the religious pomp and circumstance, meditation that seeks union with God but bypasses Jesus Christ is nothing more than pagan ritual.

In recognizing this fact, however, I wonder if we have tossed the proverbial baby out with the bath water. I wonder, by our *correctly* rejecting meditation as described above, we have incorrectly believed that any form of meditation is wrong and not for Christians. I wonder if we have done such a good job of unmasking the dangers and trappings of meditation that we have made the term "meditation" itself into a bad word. Skeptical? OK, when was the last time you used "meditation" in a sentence? We simply don't use it because we fear being linked to some cultic group of Eastern mystics.

There is a worse error of which we believers may be guilty. Not only are we not saying the word

"meditation" but, even worse, we are not *doing* what the word implies. This error is understandable if we have decided that "meditation is bad" or "meditation is not for Christians." Yet this error will prevent us from engaging in and enjoying one of God's choicest privileges for believers, namely, biblical meditation.

Before we begin our look into God's Word about meditation, let's reassure those who still feel uncomfortable with the word "meditation." Here is a list of acceptable synonyms: thinking deeply, pondering, musing, examination, contemplation, speculation, reflection, weighing, considering, concentration. Now let's glean from God's Word what He says about meditation.

Interestingly, the bulk of the biblical data dealing with meditation appears in the Old Testament, primarily the Psalms. The Psalms offer some of the deepest devotion and loftiest sentiment of the human heart and mind found anywhere in the Bible. In fact, it is fitting that such an important word as "meditation" be found so often in the Psalms.

Two key Hebrew terms for meditation merit our attention. The first term, *siach*, basically means "to go over a matter in one's mind." The expression of this action may be either inward (meditation) or outward (talking, or as we might say, "thinking out loud"). We should note the *object* of this key term. By far, the most common object of this Hebrew verb is God, specifically God's works and God's words. Consider

these verses that attest to "going over God's works in one's mind":

- Psalm 77:12—"I will meditate on all Thy work."
- Psalm 145:5—"On the glorious splendor of Thy majesty, and on Thy wonderful works, I will meditate."

We failed to meditate on the principles of the Scriptures, so their truths simply got away from us.

Now consider the following verses that attest to "going over God's words in one's mind":

- Psalm 119:15—"I will meditate on Thy precepts and regard Thy ways"
- Psalm 119:27—"Make me understand the way of Thy precepts, so I will meditate on Thy wonders."
- Psalm 119:48—"And I shall lift up my hands to Thy commandments, which I love; and I will meditate on Thy statutes?"
- Psalm 119:97—"O how I love Thy law! It is my meditation all the day."

This word for meditation should hold a powerful, important place in believers' lives. It describes the activity of a believer seriously thinking and talking of God's mighty works and words.

The second term for meditation is the Hebrew term *hagah*. It often refers to expressing deep inner meditations or longings of the heart and mind. Old Testament writers use *hagah* and related words in several ways:

1. *The mind-heart connection.* Hagah often expresses a strong

connection between the mind, where meditation takes place, and the mouth, where it is expressed. Perhaps Isaiah 59:13 best reveals this connection: "conceiving in and uttering (*hagah*) from the heart." Psalm 19:14 ["let the words of my mouth and the meditation

(*hagah*) of my heart be acceptable in Thy sight, O LORD"] provides an excellent model for expressing our deepest meditations about our wonderful Lord.

2. *Wailing and sadness of the heart.*

The books of Lamentations, Jeremiah, and Isaiah use *hagah* to mean wail or moan, in keeping with the often sad and tragic settings of these books.

Isaiah, for example, tells the terrible results of the nation's sin: "All of us growl like bears, and moan sadly like doves" (Isa. 59:11).

3. *Reflecting on God's words and works.* In two very well-known passages, *hagah* means to reflect deeply on what God has spoken and done:

- Psalm 1:2- "But his delight is in the law of the LORD, and in His law he meditates day and night."
- Joshua 1:8-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 success."

Psalm 9:16 includes a term at the end of the verse telling readers to pause and meditate on these words they have just read or sung.

Sometimes the Psalmist gives us a double dose of "meditation" in using both *siach* and *hagah* in the

same verse (Ps. 77:12; 143:5). In these verses the authors describe being so filled with God's deeds and words as to have Him at the very core of one's being.

We live in a world of incredible biblical ignorance and, frankly, it shows. Biblical principles no longer form the standard of our general social and legal morals. The terms "right" and "wrong" have gone by the wayside with the ousting of age-old standards of living. What happened? Dare we say that we as believers are to blame? Have we raised an entire generation outside the authority of God's Word? Could God's scathing words through Peter apply to us: "For it is time for judgment to begin with the household of God" (1 Pet. 4:17a)?

I am afraid we are to blame. I am afraid we dropped the ball by not passing on a heritage of truly and deeply knowing the Word of God. I am afraid we failed to meditate on and proclaim boldly the principles of Scripture, so its truths simply got away from us.

I truly believe it is not too late to begin anew a life of true biblical meditation—of deep thought and serious talk about our wonderful God as revealed in the Scriptures. I truly believe its not too late to start a life that is anchored in God and His Word. The teaching of Scripture remains clear—the knowledge of God as revealed in the Bible is the most important knowledge we can gain.

It is my deep hope and prayer that we all will strengthen our love for God's Word and works, meditating on them day and night.

- Psalm 119:23—"Even though princes sit and talk against me, Thy servant meditates on Thy statutes." ■