



# Psalm 1

## The Godly Walk

### Notes:

1. Scripture used in this Bible Study is from the New King James Version.
2. The answers for this Bible Study are from the Matthew Henry Commentary.

- 1 Blessed is the man who walks not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor stands in the path of sinners, nor sits in the seat of the scornful;
- 2 But his delight is in the law of the LORD, and in His law he meditates day and night.
- 3 He shall be like a tree planted by the rivers of water, that brings forth its fruit in its season, whose leaf also shall not wither; and whatever he does shall prosper.
- 4 The ungodly are not so, but are like the chaff which the wind drives away.
- 5 Therefore the ungodly shall 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 ungodly shall perish.

### Why do we need to know the character and condition of a godly man?

So that we may test ourselves. The Lord knows those that are his by name, but we must know them by their character; for that is agreeable to a state of probation, that we may study to answer to the character, which is indeed both the command of the law which we are bound in duty to obey and the condition of the promise which we are bound in interest to fulfil.

### How does Psalm 1 tell us about the character of the godly man?

The character of a good man is here given by the rules he chooses to walk by and to take his measures from. What we take at our setting out, and at every turn, for the guide of our conversation, whether the course of this world or the word of God, is of material consequence. An error in the choice of our standard and leader is original and fatal; but, if we be right here, we are in a fair way to do well.

### What does verse 1 tell us about the character and condition of a godly man?

A godly man, that he may avoid the evil, utterly renounces the companionship of evil-doers, and will not be led by them: He walks not in the council of the ungodly, etc. This part of his character is put first, because those that will keep the

commandments of their God must say to evil-doers, Depart from us <Ps. 119:115>, and departing from evil is that in which wisdom begins.

### Where are the ungodly and how are they described?

The ungodly are all around, the world is full of them; they walk on every side. They are here described by three characters, ungodly, sinners, and scornful.

### What does it mean to be ungodly?

Casting off the fear of God and living in the neglect of their duty to him. The word which we translate ungodly signifies such as are unsettled, aim at no certain end and walk by no certain rule, but are at the command of every lust and at the beck of every temptation.

### What does ungodliness lead to?

The ungodly break out into open rebellion against God and engage in the service of sin and Satan. Omissions make way for commissions, and by these the heart is so hardened that at length they come to be scorers, that is, they openly defy all that is sacred, scoff at religion, and make a jest of sin. Thus is the way of iniquity down-hill; the bad grow worse, sinners themselves become tempters to others and advocates for Baal. The word for sinners signifies such as are determined for the practice of sin and set it up as their trade. The scornful are those that set their mouths against the heavens. These the good man sees with a sad heart; they are a constant vexation to his righteous soul.

### What relation should the godly have with the ungodly?

He does not do as they do; and, that he may not, he does not converse familiarly with them.

### What does it mean that "he does not walk in the counsel of the ungodly?"

The godly is not present at the ungodly's councils, nor does he advise with them; though they are ever so witty, and subtle, and learned, if they are ungodly, they shall not be the men of his counsel. He does not consent to them, nor say as they say, <Lu. 23:51>. He does not take his measures from their principles, nor act according to the advice which they give and take. The ungodly are forward to give their advice against religion, and it is managed so artfully that we have reason to think ourselves happy if we escape being tainted and ensnared by it.

**What does it mean that "he stands not in the way of sinners?"**

The godly avoids doing as the ungodly 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>. He avoids (as much as may be) being where they are. That he may not imitate them, he will not associate with them, nor choose them for his companions. He does not stand in their way, to be picked up by them <Prov. 7:8>, but keeps as far from them as from a place or person infected with the plague, for fear of the contagion, <Prov. 4:14-15>. He that would be kept from harm must keep out of harm's way.

**What does it mean that "he sits not in the seat of the scornful?"**

The godly does not repose himself with those that sit down secure in their wickedness and please themselves with the searedness of their own consciences. He does not associate with those that sit in close cabal to find out ways and means for the support and advancement of the devil's kingdom, or that sit in open judgment, magisterially to condemn the generation of the righteous. The seat of the drunkards is the seat of the scornful, <Ps. 69:12>. Happy is the man that never sits in it, <Hos. 7:5>.

**What does verse 2 say the godly man delights in?**

A godly man, that he may do that which is good and cleave to it, submits to the guidance of the word of God and makes that familiar to him.

**What value does God's Word have in keeping the godly from being ungodly?**

This is that which keeps him out of the way of the ungodly and fortifies him against their temptations. By the words of thy lips I have kept me from the path of the deceiver, <Ps. 17:4>. We need not court the fellowship of sinners, either for pleasure or for improvement, while we have fellowship with the word of God and with God himself in and by his word. When thou awakest it shall talk with thee, <Prov. 6:22>. We may judge of our spiritual state by asking, "What is the law of God to us? What account do we make of it? What place has it in us?"

**Why does the godly man delight in God's Word?**

The entire affection which a good man has for the law of God: His delight is in it. He delights in it, though it be a law, a yoke, because it is the law of God, which is holy, just, and good, which he freely consents to, and so delights in, after the inner man, <Rom. 7:16,22>. All who are well pleased that there is a God must be well pleased that there is a Bible, a revelation of God, of his will, and of the only way to happiness in him.

**How does the godly man demonstrate that he delights in God's Word?**

By the intimate acquaintance which a good man keeps up with the word of God: In that law he meditates day and night; and by this it appears that his delight is in it, for what we love we love to think of, <Ps. 119:97>.

**What does it mean to meditate in God's Word?**

To meditate in God's word is to discourse with ourselves concerning the great things contained in it, with a close application of mind, a fixedness of thought, till we be suitably affected with those things and experience the savour and power of them in our hearts.

**Why must the godly man meditate on God's Word day and night?**

This we must do day and night; we must have a constant habitual regard to the word of God as the rule of our actions and the spring of our comforts, and we must have it in our thoughts, accordingly, upon every occasion that occurs, whether night or day. No time is amiss for meditating on the word of God, nor is any time unseasonable for those visits. We must not only set ourselves to meditate on God's word morning and evening, at the entrance of the day and of the night, but these thoughts should be interwoven with the business and converse of every day and with the repose and slumbers of every night. When I awake I am still with thee.

**What does it mean to be blessed?**

A gift from God; it is God who blesses, and that blessing will make a person happy. Blessednesses are blessings of all kinds, of the upper and nether springs, enough to make a person completely happy; when God blesses, none of the ingredients of happiness shall be absent.

**How does the Psalmist describe a blessed man?**

When the psalmist undertakes to describe a blessed man, he describes a good man; for, after all, those only are happy, truly happy, that are holy, truly holy; and we are more concerned to know the way to blessedness than to know wherein that blessedness will consist. Nay, goodness and holiness are not only the way to happiness <Rev. 22:14> but happiness itself; supposing there were not another life after this, yet that man is a happy man that keeps in the way of his duty.

**How is blessedness illustrated in verse 3?**

By a similitude: He shall be like a tree, fruitful and flourishing.

**What does the tree represent?**

The more we converse with the word of God the better furnished we are for every good word and work. The divine blessing produces real effects. It is the happiness of a godly man that he is planted by the grace of God. These trees were

by nature wild olives, and will continue so till they are grafted anew, and so planted by a power from above. Never any good tree grew of itself; it is the planting of the Lord, and therefore he must in it be glorified. <Isa. 61:3>, the trees of the Lord are full of sap.

#### **What does the water represent?**

Here called the rivers of water, those rivers which make glad the city of our God <Ps. 46:4>; from these a good man receives supplies of strength and vigour, but in secret undiscerned ways.

#### **What does the fruit represent?**

The results of the godly man's works: that his practices shall be fruit, abounding to a good account, <Phil. 4:17>. To those whom God first blessed he said, Be fruitful <Gen. 1:22>, and still the comfort and honour of fruitfulness are a recompense for the labour of it. It is expected from those who enjoy the mercies of grace that, both in the temper of their minds and in the tenour of their lives, they comply with the intentions of that grace, and then they bring forth fruit. And, be it observed to the praise of the great dresser of the vineyard, they bring forth their fruit (that which is required of them) in due season, when it is most beautiful and most useful, improving every opportunity of doing good and doing it in its proper time.

#### **What do the leaves represent?**

The godly man's profession of faith: that his profession shall be preserved from blemish and decay: His leaf also shall not wither. As to those who bring forth only the leaves of profession, without any good fruit, even their leaf will wither and they shall be as much ashamed of their profession as ever they were proud of it; but, if the word of God rule in the heart, that will keep the profession green, both to our comfort and to our credit; the laurels thus won shall never wither.

#### **What will be the result of the godly man's labors?**

Prosperity shall attend him wherever he goes, soul-prosperity. Whatever he does, in conformity to the law, it shall prosper and succeed to his mind, or above his hope.

#### **How does verse 4 describe the ungodly?**

In general, they are the reverse of the righteous, both in character and condition: They are not so. The Septuagint emphatically repeats this: Not so the ungodly; they are not so; they are led by the counsel of the wicked, in the way of sinners, to the seat of the scornful; they have no delight in the law of God, nor ever think of it; they bring forth no fruit but grapes of Sodom; they cumber the ground.

#### **What does the chaff represent?**

Whereas the righteous are like valuable, useful, fruitful trees, they are like the chaff which the wind drives away, the very lightest of the chaff, the dust which the owner of the floor

desires to have driven away, as not capable of being put to any use. Would you value them? Would you weigh them? They are like chaff, of no worth at all in God's account, how highly soever they may value themselves. Would you know the temper of their minds? They are light and vain; they have no substance in them, no solidity; they are easily driven to and fro by every wind and temptation, and have no steadfastness. Would you know their end? The wrath of God will drive them away in their wickedness, as the wind does the chaff, which is never gathered nor looked after more. The chaff may be, for a while, among the wheat; but he is coming whose fan is in his hand and who will thoroughly purge his floor. Those that by their own sin and folly make themselves as chaff will be found so before the whirlwind and fire of divine wrath <Ps. 35:5>, so unable to stand before it or to escape it, <Isa. 17:13>.

#### **What does verse 5 say is the fate of the ungodly?**

They will be cast out, upon their trial, as traitors convicted: They shall not stand in the judgment, that is, they shall be found guilty, shall hang down the head with shame and confusion, and all their pleas and excuses will be overruled as frivolous. There is a judgment to come, in which every man's present character and work, though ever so artfully concealed and disguised, shall be truly and perfectly discovered, and appear in their own colours, and accordingly every man's future state will be, by an irreversible sentence, determined for eternity. The ungodly must appear in that judgment, to receive according to the things done in the body. They may hope to come off, nay, to come off with honour, but their hope will deceive them: They shall not stand in the judgment, so plain will the evidence be against them and so just and impartial will the judgment be upon it.

#### **Where will the ungodly be shut out of?**

They will be for ever shut out from the society of the blessed. They shall not stand in the congregation of the righteous, that is, in the judgment (so some), that court wherein the saints, as assessors with Christ, shall judge the world, those holy myriads with which he shall come to execute judgment upon all, <Jude 14; 1 Cor. 6:2>. Or in heaven. There will be seen, shortly, a general assembly of the church of the first-born, a congregation of the righteous, of all the saints, and none but saints, and saints made perfect, such a congregation of them as never was in this world, <2 Thes. 2:1>. The wicked shall not have a place in that congregation. Into the new Jerusalem none unclean nor unsanctified shall enter; they shall see the righteous enter into the kingdom, and themselves, to their everlasting vexation, thrust out, <Lu. 13:27>. The wicked and profane, in this world, ridiculed the righteous and their congregation, despised them, and cared not for their company; justly therefore will they be for ever separated from them. Hypocrites in this world, under the disguise of a plausible profession, may thrust themselves into the congregation of the righteous and remain undisturbed and

undiscovered there; but Christ cannot be imposed upon, though his ministers may; the day is coming when he will separate between the sheep and the goats, the tares and the wheat; see <Mt. 13:41,49>. That great day (so the Chaldee here calls it) will be a day of discovery, a day of distinction, and a day of final division. Then you shall return and discern between the righteous and the wicked, which here it is sometimes hard to do, <Mal. 3:18>.

**What does verse 6 say is the reason for the different state of the godly and wicked?**

1. God must have all the glory of the prosperity and happiness of the righteous. They are blessed because the Lord knows their way; he chose them into it, inclined them to choose it, leads and guides them in it, and orders all their steps.

2. Sinners must bear all the blame of their own destruction. Therefore the ungodly perish, because the very way in which they have chosen and resolved to walk leads directly to destruction; it naturally tends towards ruin and therefore must necessarily end in it. Or we may take it thus, The Lord approves and is well pleased with the way of the righteous, and therefore, under the influence of his gracious smiles, it shall prosper and end well; but he is angry at the way of the wicked, all they do is offensive to him, and therefore it shall perish, and they in it. It is certain that every man's judgment proceeds from the Lord, and it is well or ill with us, and is likely to be so to all eternity, accordingly as we are or are not accepted of God. Let this support the drooping spirits of the righteous, that the Lord knows their way, knows their hearts <Jer. 12:3>, knows their secret devotions <Mt. 6:6>, knows their character, how much soever it is blackened and blemished by the reproaches of men, and will shortly make them and their way manifest before the world, to their immortal joy and honour. Let this cast a damp upon the security and jollity of sinners, that their way, though pleasant now, will perish at last.