

Further up, Further in

Resources for Continued Study



LOOKOUT
MOUNTAIN
PRESBYTERIAN
CHURCH

“THE STARK CONTRAST OF THE RIGHTEOUS AND THE WICKED”

For individual study or discussion

DATE: May 18, 2025

SPEAKER: Brian/Chad

SERIES: Summer in the Psalms

PASSAGE: Psalm 1

Family Dinner Table

Two Roads, One Choice

In *The Pilgrim's Progress*, a man named Christian sets out on a journey to the Celestial City. He follows the path laid out in the King's book (the Bible). Along the way, he meets two men named Formalist and Hypocrisy. Instead of going through the gate like Christian did, they jump over the wall “to make a short cut of it.”

At first, it seems like all three are heading the same direction. But when hard times fall, Formalist and Hypocrisy give up. They aren't really committed. They aren't rooted in the Truth. But Christian keeps going, even when it's tough, because he is committed to following the King's book. Psalm 1 talks about two kinds of people—those who are rooted in God's Word, like a strong tree, and those who aren't, like chaff blown away in the wind. It's a good reminder that where you place your trust and what you meditate on really matters.

- Joshua 1:8 says to “meditate on [God's Word] day and night” for “good success.” Why do you think Scripture puts so much emphasis on what we think about and focus on? How can what you “meditate on” shape your choices and direction?
- Read Jeremiah 17:7–8. Both Psalm 1 and Jeremiah 17 describe a person who trusts in the Lord as being “like a tree planted by water.” What do you think it means to be rooted in God's Word?

PRAY FOR HOME MISSIONS

Covenant College, denominational ministry partner

PRAY FOR WORLD MISSIONS

Amina & Phil, supported missionary partners

Recall from last week in Luke 24:50–53 where we read of Jesus' ascension to heaven and his investiture at the right hand of God the Father. In the heavenly throne room, Jesus continually intercedes for us. Our prayers become Christ's prayers and he “speaks to God in a human voice.”¹ As we begin our summer sermon series in the *Book of Psalms*, it is interesting to note that the voices of the psalms are about as human as Scripture gets. They are full of raw, unfiltered emotions. Theologian Rowan Williams states that in the psalms, “God has actually taken an initiative in making our language his own. And therefore you have to imagine that Jesus is speaking them...It doesn't mean that Jesus endorses ideas about revenge on our enemies or even shaking our fists at God the Father. But it does mean that Jesus treats us, our feelings, our tumultuous personalities, as real. He takes us seriously. Jesus hears all the words we speak and brings them to the Father for healing and transformation.”²

Contrasting Paths (vv. 1–2, 5)

Psalm 1 presents a key to understanding all the other psalms. It emphasizes the blessed life that comes to all who trust in the LORD. Psalm 1 begins with a beatitude and ends with a warning. It is a reflection on two different ways of being human and two contrasting paths. In Psalm 1 we see the stark contrast of the righteous and the wicked.

- Did you notice that the first word is blessed and the last is perish? How is the way of the righteous and the way of the ungodly contrasted?
- In verse 1, there is a noticeable shift from walking to standing to sitting. What harmful patterns of human behavior do these actions represent? Give examples.
- Compare verses 1–2 with Matthew 9:10–11 and 11:19? Are Jesus' actions in these NT passages at variance with Psalm 1:1–2? Explain.

Contrasting Pictures (vv. 3–4)

There is a sitting in the seat of scoffers that leads to ruin. But by meditating on God's law, the righteous will plant themselves in a way that brings life. The righteous are rooted. The wicked are rootless and “like chaff that the wind drives away.”

- Read Genesis 2. What echoes of the Garden of Eden do you notice in verses 3–4? In what ways does the “blessed” person in Psalm 1 reflect God's vision for humanity as described in Genesis 2?
- When people align their lives with God's instruction, they begin to experience true abundance—what Scripture calls ‘success’ or ‘prospering.’ How does this vision of ‘the good life’ differ from how success is typically defined in our culture?

Contrasting Destinies (v. 6)

The psalm ends where it begins: choosing between two paths—two destinies that lead either to “flourishing life or withering ruin.”³ Psalm 1 presents the central theme for the entire psalter: “Blessed is the man who makes the LORD his trust” (Psalm 40:4).

- Discuss influences that affect your life—these could be people, media, platforms, or anything else you regularly engage with. Consider how much time you spend with each and how they shape you. How can you steward your attention wisely and prioritize the voices that lead you toward righteousness?
- OT scholar Derek Kidner writes, “Whatever really shapes a man's thinking, shapes his life.”⁴ Discuss how this is true. Share examples.
- How does the psalmist highlight differences between the way of the wicked and the way of the one who meditates on God's instruction. Pay attention to repeated words or phrases—what stands out to you?

^{1–2} Williams, Rowan. *Being Human: Bodies, Minds, Persons*. 2018, Grand Rapids, MI. Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co. 107–108

³ Mackie, Tim & Collins, Jon. *Psalm 1*. Bible Project. <https://bibleproject.com/videos/psalm-1/>

⁴ Kidner, Derek. *Psalms, Volume 1*. 1973, Downers Grove, IL. IVP Academic. 64