



**Blessed is the Man
The Contrast Between the Righteous and the Wicked
Psalm 1**

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Welcome to the book of Psalms, the song book of Israel. "The title in the Hebrew (Tehillim) means Praises or Book of Praises. The title in the Greek suggests the idea of an instrumental accompaniment. Our title comes from the Greek psalmos. It is the book of worship. It is the hymn book of the temple." (McGee 1997, 658)

Really? Yes.



The English title “Psalms” (or “Psalter”) is derived from the Greek translation of the Old Testament. In the Codex Vaticanus (fourth century A.D.) the title *Psalmoi* and the subtitle *Biblos psalmôn* (“Book of Psalms”) are used; in the Codex Alexandrinus (fifth century) the name *Psalterion* appears. The Greek word *psalmos*, which translates the Hebrew *mizmôr*, signifies music accompanied by stringed instruments. Under the influence of the Septuagint and of Christianity, the word *psalmos* came to designate a “song of praise” without an emphasis on accompaniment by stringed instruments. (Barth 1966, 1) Because *mizmôr* is used in the titles of 57 of the psalms, the Greek translators used the translation of that word for the title of the entire collection. (Ross 1985, 778-779)

Yes, this is the song book of Israel and yes, they did indeed have worship bands. We will see as we study this book tunes to be used, instruments to be used, and other pointers and hints.

If there been developed a method of recording the music on paper as we see beginning in the Middle Ages, then we would have tons of sheet music as well, instead, we have all of the lyrics. Even the Greek word *psalmoi* for praise songs is the title. The word means “twangings” (of harp strings plucked). It was used for songs sung to the accompaniment of harp music. (Rosscup 2008, 866)

Just as we see in hymnals today, there are various authors who the Holy Spirit used. Some of the Psalms refer to specific events in the life of the nation or in the life of the author of that Psalm. Some Psalms even have their own title.

And unlike studying most books of the Bible, there are multiple different settings and historical contexts at play.

Psalms is filled with theology, doctrine as well as with prophecy.

Another way to look at the Psalms is to consider “the Psalms as showing us the true nature of prayer, and how believers can respond to the great saving acts of God. To what God does in an objective way, his people give their subjective response in the meditation and prayers of the Psalter.” (Harman 2011, 30)

In terms of those the Holy Spirit used to write the music we see here, yes, David did indeed write the lions share of them, around 83 or so.

David is the main writer, judging from very ancient Jewish inscriptions over 73 psalms saying *le Dawid*. This translates as “A Psalm of David.” (Rosscup 2008, 864)

Psalms 1-41 have that attached to them.

Other writers of psalms join David. Solomon has been suggested (72, 127), for he composed many songs (1 Kin. 5:32) as well as proverbs (Prov. 10:1; 25:1). The skilled musician Asaph of David’s day wrote 12 psalms, namely 50 and 73–83. The sons of Korah are associated with 10, these being 42, 44–49, 84, 85 and 87. Psalm 88 is linked with Heman (cf. 1 Kin. 4:31), and Psalm 89 with Ethan (cf. 1 Chr. 15:17, 19), both of whom were Levitical musicians. Moses may have written Psalm 90, as he wrote songs of praise in Exodus 15 and Deuteronomy 32. Psalm 119 has been linked with several, each of whom might have composed the magnificent 22 sections. (Rosscup 2008, 865)

The main message and theme in the Psalms is prayer in fellowship with God in all we do in life. Much of the book is prayer.

Most who have studied this book over the ages take the 150 chapters and subdivide it into five books or sections, almost as if using the five books of the law as a template.



Book 1 – Psalms 1 – 41 (37 by David and 4 undesignated but thought to be David)
Book 2 – Psalms 42 – 72 (18 by David and 13 by others.)
Book 3 – Psalms 73 – 89 (1 by David, 11 by Asaph, 1 by Ethan, 4 by Korah.)
Book 4 – Psalms 90 – 106 (2 by David, 1 by Moses, 10 with no title and 4 with headings but unknown authors.)
Book 5 – Psalm 107-150 (15 by David, 1 by Solomon, the rest have no designation.)

But we need to remember this, that the New Testament treated them as a unity and we see in Acts 1:14-20 two different Psalms tied together by Peter as a reason to replace Judas Iscariot. Peter quoted from Psalm 69:25 as well as Psalm 109:8.

Acts 1:20

“For it is written in the Book of Psalms: ‘**Let his dwelling place be desolate, And let no one live in it**’; and, ‘**Let another take his office.**’” (NKJV)

As we examine this book, we also come to realize that there are types of psalms, families of psalms based on a specific theme.

Hymn Psalms – many are simply songs of praise.

Lament or complaint Psalms. Psalms expressing sadness to God or complaining about God’s enemies.

Royal Psalms – these were performed before the king.

Thanksgiving Psalms – songs of thanksgiving from individuals or from the nation as a whole.

Wisdom Psalms – dealing with the theme of wisdom.

We have the Songs of Ascent, to be sung by worshipers on their way to worship at the Temple.

And then there are the Imprecatory Psalms. “An imprecation is a curse that invokes misfortune upon someone. Imprecatory psalms are those in which the author imprecates; that is, he calls down calamity, destruction, and God’s anger and judgment on his enemies. This type of psalm is found throughout the book.” (Got Questions Ministries 2014-2021)

When studying the imprecatory psalms, it is important to note that these psalms were not written out of vindictiveness or a need for personal vengeance. Instead, they are prayers that keep God’s justice, sovereignty, and protection in mind. (Got Questions Ministries 2014-2021)

Can we pray an imprecatory Psalm today? “It is not sinful to pray the imprecatory psalms against our spiritual enemies, but we should also pray with compassion and love and even thanksgiving for people who are under the devil’s influence (1 Timothy 2:1). We should desire their salvation.” (Got Questions Ministries 2014-2021)

We will also discover that there are seven penitential Psalms as well. Yes, they are patterns for us to pray in agreement with and asking forgiveness for our sins.

We will come across some terms that I also want us to know, ahead of time, what they mean.

Selah – in modern music notation, this would be a rest. But for those performing this Psalm, it could also mean crescendo to the rest, or it is a musical bridge to the next verse. It gives an opportunity for those harp players out there to do a bit of shredding before the next verse.



Maskil – for those who wish to remain in the category of, “we really do not know,” a musical notation in 13 psalms. Or, “cult song? memory passage? wisdom song performed to music?” (Hoogendyk 2017)

We really don’t know. There are as many opinions of this term as there are books on the Psalms. The translators of the NASB2020 Bible said possibly, Contemplative, or Didactic, or Skillful Psalm. (The Lockman Foundation 1995, Psalms)

Mikhtam – “This term is used in six psalms. Since in Akkadian the root ktm is used to mean ‘atone’...‘a psalm of atonement’.” (Lucas 2003, 24) Maybe.

What this tends to mean is, we are not too up on Hebrew music and forms of notation they may have developed. I have yet to find a music theory book, and I have several, dealing with the Hebrew world prior to the incarnation of Jesus. Some of the terms are guesses.

With that, it is time to dig into the song book of the ages.

Psalm 1:1–6

“Blessed is the person who does not walk in the counsel of the wicked, Nor stand in the path of sinners, Nor sit in the seat of scoffers! But his delight is in the Law of the LORD, And on His Law he meditates day and night. He will be like a tree 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. The wicked are not so, But they are like chaff which the wind blows away. Therefore the wicked will not stand in the judgment, Nor sinners in the assembly of the righteous. For the LORD knows the way of the righteous, But the way of the wicked will perish.” (NASB 2020)

We will see, frequently in Psalms, the righteous contrasted with the wicked. The author is David. There are two major themes in this psalm which point us towards the rest of the book. Many take this first psalm as the theme of the entire book.

The very first word of this book is – blessed. The last words of the book in Psalms 150 is “praise the Lord.” In between are multiple reasons why we are blessed and why we do indeed praise the Lord.

Psalm 1 is a wisdom Psalm. “It is a wisdom psalm reminiscent of the wisdom of Proverbs as it draws a contrast between two men, two approaches to life, two roads to travel, and two destinies. One way is the blessed road of those who follow God. The other is the tragic road of those who follow the ways of the wicked, the sinners, and the mockers.” (Smith and Akin 2022, 5)

These wisdom psalms are given for our guidance, and it surely looks like these wisdom psalms were the overarching psalms that gave final shape to the book of Psalms, which is why you have a wisdom psalm placed at the very beginning of the book of Psalms, teaching us once again that the fundamental nature of the book of Psalms is wisdom. (Futato 2015)

Back to that first word, in the Hebrew it is אֲשֶׁרֵי (ashre). There is another term used in the Old Testament as well and that is barukh.

Ashre occurs most in Psalms, it is indeed the first word we see.

The OT expression “blessed be (is) ...” is a wisdom form used in expressions commonly connected with the language of the OT. It is “proclamation of the relationship between God and man in the living covenant of grace ... which was created by grace; this applies also precisely to the makarism (beatitude) that is so often related to the Torah.” It has to do with life in the sphere of the Torah. The makarismic (beatitude like) proclamation is “really eschatological,” since it is realized in the covenant of the “Lord who continues to be



faithful today and tomorrow.” “Blessing is praise of the grace of God which creates salvation for the man who is chosen.” (Cazelles 1977, 448)

The word is “the formal introduction of a blessing, happy, blessed is he who; followed by a noun.” (Koehler, et al. 1994-2000, 100)

The first word we see in Psalms is a known introduction word to blessing, happiness and contentment. We are blessed with a happy and fulfilled life when we exercise wisdom and know when to say no as well as when to say yes. That is wisdom.

We learn here in Psalm 1, the follower of YAHWEH, the one who names the name of Jesus has three areas where we need to learn to say no.

Psalm 1:1a

“Blessed is the person who does not walk in the counsel of the wicked...” (NASB 2020)

Point one is, that we are blessed, as we learn to say no taking advice from the world or as David says here, the wicked. Isaiah ties the wicked to the world and the wrongdoing of the wicked to the evil of the world as he discusses the Day of the Lord in Isaiah 13.

Isaiah 13:11

“I, the LORD, will punish the world for its evil and the wicked for their sin. I will crush the arrogance of the proud and humble the pride of the mighty.” (NLT)

Why would we, as followers of Jesus Christ who are no longer of the world, ever want to listen to guidance from the world?

If we want to have a happy and fulfilling life, which is what the Lord wants for us, then we are not to listen to them or allow them to provide us guidance.

Quite often, the difference between success or failure in a person’s career is determined by whether that person has been guided and nurtured by a mentor. The same can be true in spiritual matters. The extent to which a person matures spiritually and stays that way is often determined by the presence or absence of a spiritual mentor. (Thomas Nelson Publishers 2001, 191-192)

We have a classic example of listening to the right voices and taking Godly wisdom versus worldly wisdom in the decision leading to the splitting of Israel into two separate kingdoms after the death of Solomon.

1 Kings 12:3–5

“The leaders of Israel summoned him, and Jeroboam and the whole assembly of Israel went to speak with Rehoboam. “Your father was a hard master,” they said. “Lighten the harsh labor demands and heavy taxes that your father imposed on us. Then we will be your loyal subjects.” Rehoboam replied, “Give me three days to think this over. Then come back for my answer.” So the people went away.” (NLT)

The King consulted with elders, those men who had served Solomon and knew Godly wisdom, and they counseled him to do what the people wanted and lighten up on the mandatory service job assignments; but he was not too excited by that thought. So instead, he consulted some of the young men who were new hires, who were into things of the world and loved the cachet of being around power.



That group gave him wicked worldly advice advising him to tell the people he would add to the load and further increase the level of discipline to be exercised on those who were serving involuntarily at any given moment.

The people said no, and the nation split into two. The King had walked in the counsel of the wicked. Our first warning, do not follow the advice of the world, of wicked people; those who operate in the flesh, the sin nature and not in the Holy Spirit.

Romans 8:6–8

“Having one’s mind controlled by the old nature is death, but having one’s mind controlled by the Spirit is life and shalom. For the mind controlled by the old nature is hostile to God, because it does not submit itself to God’s Torah—indeed, it cannot. Thus, those who identify with their old nature cannot please God.” (CJB)

Psalms 1:1b

“...**Nor stand in the path of sinners, ...**” (NASB 2020)

This second point being made by David is lifestyle oriented. First, we are not to seek advice from those who are incapable of giving good advice, those who are unbelievers and are, by definition wicked, worldly and in control of the sin nature.

And David adds the idea of staying a while, stopping to look and listen, and hanging around or hanging out with. The word pathway describes a manner of life, the way one lives. “Sinners” are those who miss God’s mark. They are in the habit of standing on the opposite side from God. (Smith and Akin 2022, 6)

The word way means “manner of life” or “lifestyle.” The word translated stand (AMAD, ah-mod’) means “to abide in.” The word translated sinners literally means “criminals” or “offenders.” So, participating in the lifestyle of those who break God’s Law makes us spiritual criminals. (Higley 2007, 8)

Jesus Christ died on the cross in order to set us free from the slavery of sin and death. And when He rose from the dead three days later, He proved He is indeed able to save.

Because of Jesus, we are to not take advice from those who do not know Jesus. The culture would tell you and me otherwise, that we need to listen to them and be more accepting and inclusive of those who have lifestyles that the Bible calls sinful. The psalmist here though has added that since we now follow the Lord, we are to totally and utterly vacate the lifestyle of sinners; you know, the one we used to follow before we believed.

This does not mean we hide in our Christian ghettos and never venture out. You can’t make disciples unless you get to know those who need Jesus. Just don’t copy their lifestyle.

Psalms 1:1c

“...**Nor sit in the seat of scoffers!**” (NASB 2020)

False teachers, in some cases, encourage those who listen to engage in what is sinful activity. If we listen to them, or to the culture and begin the process of compromising our witness, then as others watch us, we appear to be teaching them how to sin as well. “Sitting in the seat of mockers, or “the scornful,” refers to teaching or encouraging others to sin as a way of mocking God. This means we should not have anything in our lives that could encourage others to sin.” (Higley 2007, 8)



The character and behavior of those who are blessed, is one that is the antithesis of what the world would advise us to do, how to live and what we would be sharing with others. That is the negative side. What is the positive side of this?

Psalm 1:2–3

“But his delight is in the Law of the LORD, And on His Law he meditates day and night. He will be like a tree 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.” (NASB 2020)

How do we take what God’s word says?

For the one who is blessed, they delight in the Law of the Lord, the Torah of YAHWEH. Delight is the word *ḥēpēs* (ḥēpēs). The basic meaning is to feel great favor towards something...In the case of ḥāpēs, the object solicits favor by its own intrinsic qualities. The subject is easily attracted to it because it is desirable. (Wood 1999, 310)

Meditating on the word day and night means we are making God’s word part of who we are.

Jesus promised us the Holy Spirit in John 14:15 to teach us all things and to remind us of what Jesus says. That means Jesus has the expectation that we will indeed spend time in the Word of God. I have discovered it is hard to remember something if you have never read it in the first place.

What David is telling us is that the one who is blessed doesn’t just read it, but they chew on it and meditate on it day and night.

Can’t sleep, are you too busy going over work or whatever? Here is the secret per Isaiah.

Isaiah 26:3–4

“You will keep in perfect peace all who trust in you, all whose thoughts are fixed on you! Trust in the LORD always, for the LORD GOD is the eternal Rock.” (NLT)

As we meditate on God’s word, we are allowing the Holy Spirit the opportunity to speak to us. Can’t sleep, pray and read the word. Meditate and chew on it.

I discover that after some time with Him, my mind is at rest, and I can now sleep.

“The law of the Lord” is the daily bread of the true believer. And yet, in David’s day, how small was the volume of inspiration, for they had scarcely anything save the first five books of Moses! How much more, then, should we prize the whole written Word which it is our privilege to have in all our houses! (Spurgeon n.d., 2)

Psalm 1:3

“He will be like a tree 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.” (NASB 2020)

Our culture tells us the path to happiness is to have more stuff than the folks next door. Or it is to do what you want whenever you want. But here, we learn it is to be in the Word of God.

As we learn to say yes to saying no, we are establishing our roots in the Lord. The picture here is that of a deep rooted well-watered tree that is impervious to drought because the roots go down deep. And, this tree is planted right next to the source of water.



Our source is Jesus, and He offers living water that as we live in the Spirit being spirit led and spirit filled, we to sink down our roots and because of the living water, are impervious to drought, those tests or trials which we know will indeed come, we continue to bear fruit. We can then agree with James.

James 1:2–4

“Count it all joy, my brothers, when you meet trials of various kinds, for you know that the testing of your faith produces steadfastness. And let steadfastness have its full effect, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing.” (ESV)

When we read the word prosper, this is not defined as what a prosperity teacher would want to twist it to mean. The word in the Hebrew is יָצַלְיָהּ (yǎslīh). The word means “be strong, effective, powerful, of the spirit...be of use...succeed...be successful...successful, succeed, enjoy success...successful man...make something succeed, bring something to successful conclusion...make someone prosper”. (Holladay and Köhler 2000, 306) Succeed.

This is a characteristic of the one who says yes to God’s will, yes to the Lord rather than the world.

Romans 12:2

“Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is **the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect.**” (ESV)

“The people who live this life trust God to plant them! They trust God to make them prosper. These are happy people because the road they travel pleases God. What then does a spiritually prosperous life look like? To answer, we can restate verse 1. Such a person walks in the advice of the godly, he stands in the pathway of the righteous, and he sits in the company of the hopeful. He studies the Word. He acts with wisdom. He is devoted to God’s will. This life is the truly prosperous life.” (Smith and Akin 2022, 7)

And yes, there are indeed those out there who twist this to mean financial prosperity, but that is not the case. This is prosperity on God’s terms. He wants what is best for each of us and as we live a blessed life, that enables the Holy Spirit to work through us as we trust Him and delight in His will. We are successful per His definition.

Matthew 25:21

“His master said to him, **‘Well done, good and faithful servant. You have been faithful over a little; I will set you over much. Enter into the joy of your master.’**” (ESV)

That to me, when I see Jesus, face to face, is what I want to hear and is His measure of success.

Faithfulness will, at times, means by passing a cash making opportunity because of the need to be faithful to Jesus. The investment might be a good one from the world’s perspective but is it from the Lord’s. Will it result in us taking advice from someone who, we just learned earlier, we need not to be taking advice from?

It is not outward prosperity which the Christian most desires and values; it is soul prosperity which he longs for. We often, like Jehoshaphat, make ships to go to Tarshish for gold, but they are broken at Ezion-geber; but even here there is a true prospering, for it is often for the soul’s health that we should be poor, bereaved, and persecuted. Our worst things are often our best things. As there is a curse wrapped up in the wicked man’s mercies, so there is a blessing concealed in the righteous man’s crosses, losses, and sorrows. (Spurgeon n.d., 2)

Now comes the contrast. The wisdom of why follow the Lord.



Psalm 1:4–6

“The wicked are not so, But they are like chaff which the wind blows away. Therefore the wicked will not stand in the judgment, Nor sinners in the assembly of the righteous. For the LORD knows the way of the righteous, But the way of the wicked will perish.” (NASB 2020)

The ungodly, the wicked, the unsaved, those who are following the dictates of the culture rather than the Lord. All of those who are indulging in a lifestyle of the flesh, they are not like a well planted tree. Not at all.

They are the exact opposite of it. They are no better than chaff.

This is a common theme in the Bible, the wicked are consistently referred to this way. What is chaff? Many of us did not grow up in an agricultural environment and may not know what it is.

Chaff - Loose hulls separated from the edible grains by threshing and winnowing. In Bible times the common sight of winnowed grain remaining when the wind blew away the lighter husks gave rise to the vivid image of good people or nations surviving judgment while the wicked do not. (Elwell and Beitzel 1988, 422)

Matthew 3:12

“His winnowing fork is in his hand, and he will clean out his threshing floor and will gather his wheat into the storehouse, but the chaff he will burn up with inextinguishable fire.” (NET 2nd ed.)

John the Baptist continued this into the New Testament with what he said here in Matthew 3:12. Normally, once the chaff is burned, the fire goes out and it really does burn fast. As we learn in verse 4, the world is, unless they come to Christ, chaff and ready for judgment. The fire John referred to though is one that burns continually, referring to hell.

We are seeing two people contrasted. The blessed and righteous person is looking at a life that never ends and continues on for eternity. But the one who is of the world, has a real short future, just like chaff.

In fact, all they have to look forward to is judgment. They will not stand meaning they will not survive God's judgment.

If only those who are currently on that path could see what is in their future, unless they come to Christ for salvation, but they can't see this.

The world says that to be religious is foolishness. Religious people never have any fun or accomplish anything, the wicked say. If you want to amount to something and enjoy yourself doing it, get on the fast track of sin, reach out for whatever you want, and take it. Be happy. (Boice 2005, 18)

But that is all a lie. Satan lied to Eve and convinced her to take of the fruit from the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil, she believed the lie she would be like God. Nope, that was a lie.

But those we are instructed to ignore and not take advice from, they believe they are giving good advice, but it comes from who they follow, the exact same one who lied to Eve.

All of us are confronted by the culture and the world every day. Some of what we hear sounds attractive, but it is all a lie. Especially if it is intended to draw you away from the Lord or from living according to a Biblical worldview. The culture's view is seen in Proverbs 14:12.



Proverbs 14:12

"There is a way that seems right to a person, but its end is the way that leads to death." (NET 2nd ed.)

In His love, the Lord has placed into the very first chapter of Psalms, wisdom and in that wisdom a warning. Those who are not blessed, who are not followers of Jesus Christ, are nothing more than those who will be burned away. They will never stand in the assembly of the righteous.

This is made very clear to us by John as he relates to us what the angel told him about those who will live in the New Jerusalem in the presence of God Himself for all eternity.

Revelation 21:24–27

"The nations will walk by its light, and the kings of the earth will bring their splendor into it. Its gates will never close, they stay open all day because night will not exist there, and the honor and splendor of the nations will be brought into it. **Nothing impure may enter it, nor anyone who does shameful things or lies; the only ones who may enter are those whose names are written in the Lamb's Book of Life.**" (CJB)

It is clear, those who are of the world and following the whims of Satan, will be gone, just like chaff and will not survive judgment passing into the eternal state with the Lord, they will never be in the company of believers.

Since we have been viewing this contrast between two lifestyles, righteous versus wicked, David concludes the psalm, agreeing with what it was we saw in Proverbs 14:12.

Jesus is, for those who have believed, the way, the truth and the life and indeed, no one comes to the Father except through Him (John 14:6). Salvation is in Christ alone. It is through the grace of God that if we believe, we are saved. In other words, we are saved by grace alone through faith alone in Christ alone. There is no other way.

We will close by seeing what Moses told the nation.

Deuteronomy 30:11–20

"You know God's laws, and it isn't impossible to obey them. His commands aren't in heaven, so you can't excuse yourselves by saying, 'How can we obey the LORD's commands? They are in heaven, and no one can go up to get them, then bring them down and explain them to us.' And you can't say, 'How can we obey the LORD's commands? They are across the sea, and someone must go across, then bring them back and explain them to us.' No, these commands are nearby and you know them by heart. All you have to do is obey! Today I am giving you a choice. You can choose life and success or death and disaster. I am commanding you to be loyal to the LORD, to live the way he has told you, and to obey his laws and teachings. You are about to cross the Jordan River and take the land that he is giving you. If you obey him, you will live and become successful and powerful. On the other hand, you might choose to disobey the LORD and reject him. So I'm warning you that if you bow down and worship other gods, you won't have long to live. Right now I call the sky and the earth to be witnesses that I am offering you this choice. Will you choose for the LORD to make you prosperous and give you a long life? Or will he put you under a curse and kill you? Choose life! Be completely faithful to the LORD your God, love him, and do whatever he tells you. The LORD is the only one who can give life, and he will let you live a long time in the land that he promised to your ancestors Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob." (CEV)



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