

A Look at the First Psalm

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1 Blessed is the man that walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor standeth in the way of sinners, nor sitteth in the seat of the scornful.

2 But his delight is in the law of the LORD; and in his law doth he meditate day and night.

3 And he shall be like a tree planted by the rivers of water, that bringeth forth his fruit in his season; his leaf also shall not wither; and whatsoever he doeth shall prosper.

4 The ungodly are not so: but are like the chaff which the wind driveth away.

5 Therefore the ungodly shall not stand in the judgment, nor sinners in the congregation of the righteous.

6 For the LORD knoweth the way of the righteous: but the way of the ungodly shall perish.

Even from a young age I have always been a person who loves to gather information and use it as the basis for action. As a teenager I used to follow around the repairmen who came to our house to fix our various appliances, ask questions, and then the next time I could fix them myself. I guess that is why I studied medicine. I love to ask people all the right questions, pull out the answers and use that to help them get well.

Solving problems, whether they be health, finances, relationships or other issues not only depends on asking the right questions, it also depends on getting the answers from the most reliable and knowledgeable sources.

"Blessed is the man the walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly" - Psalm 1:1a

This verse tells us the place where we need to get the answers for all of life's questions. It says blessed, which can also be interpreted as happy, is the person who does not get counsel (information or answers) from those sources that are considered "ungodly." Ungodly sources are not just people who hate or do not believe in God. They are sources or people who do not get their information from acknowledging God's wisdom as supreme. In other words, they are people who look at world generated facts as the ultimate input for their output. One of the phrases that changed my way of thinking was this one. "There are the facts and then there is the Truth. What man sees as fact can change over time, but Truth never changes.

For instance, years ago I was disabled and in excruciating nerve pain. The doctor told me that I would never work again. But the truth is God is Jehovah Rophe, the LORD who heals me. I am now totally healed and working every day. The things that are facts today can change in the light of God's truth.

So if God is the ultimate source of truth, then why do we seek truth from fallible sources? We watch the news, scan the internet, read self-help books, ask our friends, listen to experts and hang on the words of those we respect as "in the know." But, if they are not getting their wisdom and answers from the ultimate source, then all they have are assumptions based on what they consider reliable facts. It may not be Truth. I remember a stock broker telling me one day, "Joe, if you want to really know how to invest, then just put your money in the opposite direction of everyone else."

Several years ago I was asking the LORD where I should invest some retirement capital. I had been burnt before on the stock market, following the advice of the experts, and I wanted to know what God had to say. My wife and I were discussing that very thing the following day as we were driving in our van. In the middle of that conversation I looked up and saw a sign. No, I don't mean some sort of bright light or writing in the sky. I mean a literal electronic road sign. It said, "SILVER ALERT." I asked my wife Heidi if she knew what that meant. She had no clue, nor did I. Later I found out that it meant that an elderly person had wandered off. Was God trying to tell me to buy silver?

The next day as we were driving to church we were again discussing our request of God and the "sign." I looked to my right and I saw something that I had never noticed before. It was another type of sign. This time it was a street sign. It read, "SILVER FOX DRIVE." I laughed as I asked Heidi if she thought God was trying to tell us something and before I could get the words out of my mouth, here was another street sign, "SILVER FOX DRIVE." The road was not just a road; it was a circle and joined the street we were traveling on again. Well, at that point I did not have to be told another time. Three signs all pointing to silver. As soon as I could, I bought some silver investments. Do you want to know how good God is at investing? As of right now my investment is up over 200%! It is one of the best investments I have ever made.

God is a wealth of great advice and He is more than willing to share it with His children if they will just ask Him. So it is true, as this passage implies, blessed and happy is the person who does not base their counsel on those who do not acknowledge God as the ultimate source of knowledge, but from the counsel of those who do or from the counsel of God Himself. In 2 Chronicles 20:20 it says, "*Believe in the Lord your God, so shall ye be established; believe his prophets, so shall ye prosper.*" Modern day prophets are those who rely on God's wisdom for what they speak. They are those whose wisdom may, on the surface, go against the world's thinking, but in the end their advice turns out to be the truth.

So the next time you start to turn to the internet to find out the answers to you life's problems make a 180 degree turn, pick up your prayer phone and use it instead. God is the source of all truth since He is the creator of all things. Why not ask Him. He may answer through His Word (the Bible), godly people, an inner voice or unction or even a sign, but He will answer you.

"nor standeth in the way of sinners" - Psalm 1:1b

In the same way the ungodly person does not acknowledge God as the ultimate source of wisdom, a sinner is a person who does not acknowledge God as their ultimate

authority. The Bible says in James 4:17, *"Therefore to him that knoweth to do good and doeth it not, to him it is sin."* Sinners do the opposite of what God would have them to do, and in that "doing", they sin. They do what they want to do, when and how they want to do it, without regard for God's laws. When I was younger I thought that there were two forces in the universe, God who is good and Satan who is evil. God has since set me straight on the truth. There is only one power in the universe. He is the one we call God. Good comes from acknowledging God and obeying Him. Evil results from shunning God and doing what is right in our own eyes. Satan is only evil because he hates God, has decided to disobey Him and is enticing others to do the same. He has no inherent power of his own, but only that which is given to him by God. Isaiah 14:16 says *"Is this the man that made the earth to tremble, that did shake kingdoms;"* When we finally see Satan as he really is, we will understand he is nothing in the light of the power of our LORD.

In the past my understanding of this phrase in Psalm 1 was a picture of a person standing on the same road as a group of people who were doing sinful things. But it really has a much deeper meaning than that. It speaks to us that we should not be going where sinners go, doing what sinners do or getting our enjoyment out of the same things that sinners enjoy. In other words we should not be following the same way or path that a sinner would take to get where we want to go.

Jesus in Matthew Chapter 7:13-14 warns us, *"Enter ye in at the strait gate: for wide is the gate, and broad is the way, that leadeth to destruction, and many there be which go in thereat: Because strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it."*

Did you see that? There are two gates and two ways or paths. One way is narrow, meaning, as the verse says, that there are few who are on it and it leads to a life full of joyfulness. The other way is broad, with a lot of people on it and it leads to a sad life full of destruction. This last way is what this Psalm is trying to warn us about. A few years ago my friend Terry Wise had a vision. In that vision he saw throngs of people headed toward a cliff. They were young and old, single and married, and all different sizes and shapes. They looked like they were totally unaware of where they were headed and were just enjoying life as they blindly headed toward the cliff that led to a cavern glowing with hell's fire. His immediate response was, "I need to grab hold of these people and make them aware of where they are headed so they won't end up in that cavern."

The broad way, as Luke 13:28 puts it, leads to where *"There shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth..."* I know that this is speaking of Hell, but just as the godly person enjoys the benefits of following God now, so does the sinner reap the consequences of disobedience in this lifetime also.

Several years ago there was a popular bracelet that many people wore. You may have owned one yourself. On it was inscribed WWJD which is the acronym for **W**hat **W**ould **J**esus **D**o. In John 5:19, Jesus gives us insight into his obedience to the Father. He says, *"The Son can do nothing of himself, but what he seeth the Father do: for what things soever he doeth, these also doeth the Son likewise."* Do you want to know WWJD? To Jesus it was simple. **W**hat **W**ould **F**ather **D**o (WWFD) and in that, we do

not have to guess. God tells us everything we need to know about His character and nature in His Word.

So when you have a choice to make, take the road that leads to life. Acknowledge God as the ultimate authority. Ask yourself, WWFD and do that. Remember, He wrote the owner's manual on how this whole life thing works, and if we follow that, He gives us an extended, beyond lifetime warranty!

"nor sitteth in the seat of the scornful" - Psalm 1:1c

The Free Online Dictionary defines scorn as:

- a. Contempt or disdain felt toward a person or object considered despicable or unworthy.
- b. The expression of such an attitude in behavior or speech; derision.

The first part of the phrase, "sitteth in the seat" indicates a place of judgment. Judgment, which means to make an ultimate decision or ruling, can be based on any number of foundational values. This verse tells us not to sit as a judge with a fundamental attitude of contempt or disdain for others. Scorn colors our world toward the negative. It causes us to tear down others to make us look good. It does not allow for imperfection and expresses that verbally to everyone who will listen. It is one of the sins that God hates the most because it is full of self-pride and arrogance and keeps us from seeing our own faults and the need for a Savior. Jesus expressed it best when he says in Matthew 7:5, *"Thou hypocrite, first cast out the beam out of thine own eye; and then shalt thou see clearly to cast out the mote out of thy brother's eye."* The Apostle Paul says in Romans 12:10, *"Be kindly affectioned one to another with brotherly love; in honour preferring one another."*

Mercy is when we choose to not pass judgment on someone that deserves it. Grace is when we choose to bless someone who is not worthy of it. This is the kind of attitude God has toward us and the way He expects us to treat others even if they have hurt us in some way *"That ye may be the children of your Father which is in heaven: for he maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust."* - Matthew 5:45.

My office manager, Pamela once said, "You see everyone through rose colored glasses." My philosophy of life, that no one is a castaway and everyone is created by God for Kingdom purposes, has guided me well in this way. Do I have my bad days? Sure. Do I sometimes get off the path and murmur and complain? Uh Huh. Have I had to repent? Definitely! But then the Holy Spirit whispers to me and shows me God's heart toward His children. Romans 5:8 says, *"But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us."* Wow, even before I was born and He knew I would sin against Him, the Father sent His son Jesus to die for ME! I am loved unconditionally, so I can afford to do the same for others.

Therefore choose to sit in the seat of mercy and grace when it comes to your judgment of others. Do not treat them with contempt or disdain. See them as God sees them, worthy of His never ending love. In this, you will be blessed.

"But his delight is in the law of the LORD; and in his law doth he meditate day and night." - Psalm 1:2

Verse 2 tells us where our delight should be, in the law of the LORD. Now I must admit, when I first pondered on this verse, I saw mental images of Moses standing on a mountaintop holding up the 10 Commandments on stone tablets amidst lightning and thunder. I know that those are the best known examples of what we call the law, but that did not seem to cause me to be overjoyed with delight. The law of the LORD in this case is probably better explained by the Amplified Version when it states that His law is "the precepts, the instructions and the teachings of God"

So we are not just talking about the formal law in the Old Testament scriptures. We are talking about *"Every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God"* - Matthew 4:4b

There are two Greek words translated as our English "word", Logos and Rhema. Logos refers principally to the total inspired Word of God and to Jesus as the living Word. It is normally the word we read. Rhema refers to a word that is spoken or "uttered." It is a "now" word breathed by Holy Spirit into our spirit with application to a current situation or need.

So the law of the LORD is both the written and the spoken word of God. Both are enlightened to us by Holy Spirit. This is the law (word) that should delight us. Again, as the Amplified tells us, "the precepts, the instructions and the teachings of God." It is this law that delights us that we meditate on day and night.

How am I supposed to do that you may ask? Well, if we go back to the concept in verse 1 that says that God is the source of all truth and that this truth has the resolutions to all of our questions, then the answer is simple. As we live life and need direction, we meditate on the available source of that truth, the word of the Lord, given to us in written form and breathed from the Holy Spirit. Instead of mulling on what we or others think are the answers, we go to the source of all truth and meditate on what He has to say about our situation.

Many times I find myself deep in thought about how to handle a particular situation or need. I come up with all sorts of scenarios and plans on how to solve my dilemma. I even try to come up with alternative plans in case the first one fails. I worry, fret and become anxious as I play those thoughts over and over in my mind hoping that I got it right. Or, I start looking things up on the internet, asking my family or coworkers or listen to the latest expert on the subject. I use up tremendous mental resources trying to figure it out. Then, I stop and ask myself, "What are you doing?" You are a child of the one who has created all knowledge, the Omniscient God. He has the answers and He is willing to divulge them to you if you just ask. So I ask, and guess what? The answers come. The anxiety and stress melt away into *"the peace of God that passes all understanding"* - Philippians 4:7 and I can rest in the truth that *"His ways are higher than my ways and His thoughts higher than my thoughts."* - Isaiah 55:9

So for me, meditating on the word day and night is continually turning to Holy Spirit for His Word, His Truth and His Answers in all of life's challenges, situations and directional

changes. It is relying on my relationship with the Holy Spirit as my source of truth and knowledge instead of spinning my wheels in world generated facts. It helps me to understand what Paul meant when he said, *"Pray without ceasing"* - 1 Thessalonians 5:17 and what Jesus meant when he said *"you are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of it"* - John 15:19 We can truly be in a personal, real time relationship with our LORD, 7 x 24, day and night. Ephesians 3:6 says, that He has *"raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus."*

If we are not really of this world any more, then why would we be seeking this world's wisdom for anything? We are citizens of Heaven and therefore should be seeking the wisdom that comes from above, all of the time, for every situation and circumstance.

"And he shall be like a tree planted by the rivers of water, that bringeth forth his fruit in his season;" - Psalm 1:3a

In verse 3 we start to see the benefits of being different from the rest of the world. The psalmist uses the picture of a tree that is planted by not one, but multiple *rivers*. This tree has multiple sources of what is fundamental to life . . . water. And since it has more than one source, if one river is diverted or temporarily runs dry, another one takes its place. Rivers and water are many times used in the Bible in reference to the Holy Spirit. For instance, in John 7:38-39, Jesus declares,

"He that believeth on me, as the scripture hath said, out of his belly shall flow *rivers* of living water. (But this spake he of the *Spirit*, which they that believe on him should receive: for the *Holy Ghost* was not yet given; because that Jesus was not yet glorified.)"

A person who follows this Psalm will have the advantage of the Holy Spirit pouring Himself into him in rivers of wisdom and understanding, counsel and might and of knowledge and the fear of the LORD. See Isaiah 11:2

That person, through the power of the Holy Spirit, will *"bring forth fruit in his season."* In other words, the fruit or blessings that will come into his life will not be early or late, but come at the absolutely correct time and place for maximum benefit. This is a crucial concept to understand. We live in a "fast food" mentality age. We want it and we want it now. But the Lord knows when the blessings will do the most good and we need to wait for His timing. As it says in Psalm 37:7-9

"Rest in the Lord, and wait patiently for him: fret not thyself because of him who prospereth in his way, because of the man who bringeth wicked devices to pass. Cease from anger, and forsake wrath: fret not thyself in any wise to do evil. For evildoers shall be cut off: but those that wait upon the Lord, they shall inherit the earth."

I will give you an example of what I call the "House Next Door" timing of God in my own life. During the recent recession in 2010 I felt I was supposed to purchase a foreclosed home as a kind of investment. I prayed and asked the Lord for wisdom and favor in this matter and did my homework on just the kind of house I wanted. I found a foreclosed home that I thought the Lord had led me to and I started negotiating with the foreclosure

company. They gave me a price that they felt they could sell it for and I accepted their offer.

But, after several weeks, they called me and told me they had made a mistake and could not sell it to me at the price on which we had agreed. We renegotiated at a higher price and I waited again. One day, several weeks later, still with no contract in hand and standing in front of the house, I started complaining to the Lord. "Lord", I said. "I thought this was the house You led me to. What's the deal God?" At that very moment I looked to my left, and saw another house with a "For Sale" sign in the window. I really hadn't noticed it before because I thought I had checked out all the foreclosures in the area.

I felt the Lord urging me to look into this one. When I researched it on the internet, sure enough, it was a foreclosure with a different company. When I had my real estate agent take my wife and me through the house, we were amazed. It looked like no one had ever lived in it. It was more open and spacious and had all the upgrades that anyone would want. Plus, the foreclosure price of the house had been falling rapidly for the past several months right into my price range. I immediately canceled my bid on the first house and secured this house for the same price. This time there was no long weeks of waiting. Everything happened as though all the barriers had been blown away.

Now I know why the Lord showed me the first house. If I had not been negotiating on that house I would have never seen the one next door. Even if I had seen it a few months before, I would not have considered it because it was out of my price range. I believe God caused the delay so I could see the opportunity He really wanted me to have; the "House Next Door."

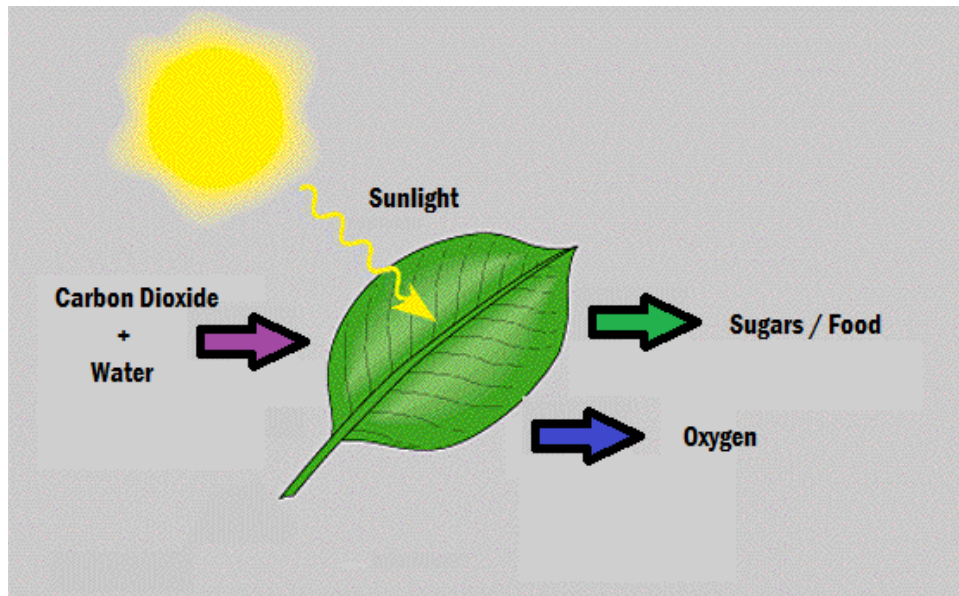
I have used this story many times to encourage people who felt the Lord let them down because He did not answer in their timing. Sometimes He uses circumstances to position us right where He wants us so He can pour out the real blessing. Lift up your eyes in those times of disappointment and look around. Your opportunity could be just right next door. (By the way, just as a confirmation that God's hand was preventing me from buying that first house; it did sell at little while later at \$20,000 less than my first offer.)

"his leaf also shall not wither; and whatsoever he doeth shall prosper." - Psalm 1:3b

As I was praying, I believe the Lord gave some unique insight into this verse.

What function does a leaf play in the life of a tree? A leaf is a factory that uses a process called photosynthesis.

"Photosynthesis is a process used by plants and other organisms to convert light energy, normally from the sun, into chemical energy that can be used to fuel the organisms' activities." - Wikipedia



The leaf takes the energy from the Sun and converts carbon dioxide, which is toxic to us as humans, and turns it into oxygen which is beneficial to us and also uses it to provide food for the tree. As long as the leaf is open and not withered and is pointed to the Sun, it benefits itself and us.

Let's apply this to us as believers. As long as the leaf of our life is open and pointed to the Son (Jesus), we are able to take the toxic things in our environment, physically, emotionally and spiritually, and change them, through the power of His Spirit, to benefit not only ourselves, but all those around us.

We become like Jesus:

"God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and with power, and because God was with him, he went around doing good and healing everyone who was oppressed by the devil." - Acts 10:38

This third verse, in Psalm 1, goes on to say that "whatever he does will prosper." The word translated as "whatever" means "all, any and every" thing. The word prosper means "to advance, succeed, be profitable or prosperous. So we can read this part of the verse as:

"All, any and everything he does will advance, succeed, be profitable and prosperous."

Wow, what a promise we have here. IF, we follow the advice found in verses 1 and 2, not only will we take the toxicity around us and turn it into blessing for ourselves and others, but everything we do will be prosperous! I don't know about you, but that seems like a great deal to me.

***"The ungodly are not so: but are like the chaff which the wind driveth away."
- Psalm 1:4***

Now this Psalm turns to what happens to those the Lord considers the "ungodly." Now remember, the term ungodly doesn't just mean "bad people", but those who do not value the wisdom of the Lord. For instance in Matthew 7:21-23, Jesus declares:

"Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven. Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works? And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity."

The ungodly do not receive all of the blessings that God gives to those who follow Him. He sees them as chaff, or the husk part of the plant that has no value, that the wind violently blows away and no one notices. They may seem to be people who are currently succeeding, but in God's economy *"...the wealth of the sinner is laid up for the just."* - Proverbs 13:22.

"Therefore the ungodly shall not stand in the judgment, nor sinners in the congregation of the righteous." - Psalm 1:5

Even though it appears to the world that the ungodly are favored, they are not. When is all said and done and they appear before the Lord at the Great White Throne Judgment they will not stand.

"Who can stand before His indignation? Who can endure the burning of His anger? His wrath is poured out like fire, And the rocks are broken up by Him." - Nahum 1:6

And at the end of time when all things become new and evil is no more, the ungodly and the sinner will not be found in the midst of those who have followed the Lord. Their inheritance is not with the righteous, but lies in another direction.

"For the LORD knoweth the way of the righteous: but the way of the ungodly shall perish." - Psalm 1:6

The ways of those who follow the Lord will become the new norm. Those ways will be the only ones that are rewarded. As it says about this new age in Revelation 5:10 - *"And (He) hast made us unto our God kings and priests: and we shall reign on the earth."* and also in Revelation 11:15, *"The kingdoms of this world have become the kingdoms of our Lord and of His Christ, and He shall reign forever and ever!"*

But the ways of the ungodly will perish with them. Their fate is best told in the following passage from Revelation:

"And I saw a great white throne, and him that sat on it, from whose face the earth and the heaven fled away; and there was found no place for them. And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God; and the books were opened: and another book was opened, which is the book of life: and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in

the books, according to their works. And the sea gave up the dead which were in it; and death and hell delivered up the dead which were in them: and they were judged every man according to their works. And death and hell were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death. And whosoever was not found written in the book of life was cast into the lake of fire." - Revelation 20:11 – 15

I believe Jesus put it best when he said in Mark 8:36-37 - *"For what shall it profit a man, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? Or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?"*

Conclusion

At the end of his life Joshua posed a question to the Israelites.

"And if it seem evil unto you to serve the Lord, choose you this day whom ye will serve; whether the gods which your fathers served that were on the other side of the flood, or the gods of the Amorites, in whose land ye dwell: but as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord." - Joshua 24:15

He decided that he and his family would serve the Lord. Even though this Psalm was not written yet, he intuitively knew that by following the Lord he would leave a legacy that would not be forgotten. Verse 31 of Joshua records that legacy.

"And Israel served the LORD all the days of Joshua, and all the days of the elders that outlived Joshua, and which had known all the works of the LORD, that he had done for Israel." - Joshua 24:31

Joshua's challenge is still as relevant for today as it was then. Choose this day who you will serve. Will you heed the words of this Psalm and claim the rewards of righteous living, or choose the pleasures of this world for a season.

I know my answer. As for me and my house, WE WILL SERVE THE LORD!