

The Life of God from Psalms

An analysis of Psalms 1:1-3

By William R. Cunningham

Psalm 1:1-3 (NASB95) {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}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. The blessed man
2. Does not walk in the counsel of the wicked
3. Does not stand in the path of sinners
4. Does not sit in the seat of the scoffers
5. He delights in the law of the LORD
6. He meditates on the law of the LORD day and night
7. He will be like a tree planted by the streams of water
8. He will yield fruit his season like the tree
9. Not one fruit will wither like the tree's leaf
10. Whatever he does, he prospers

This passage of scripture seems to indicate that we will prosper in the things we do if we don't follow the way of sinners.

If this is so then why do people struggle so much who call themselves Christians? Why do those who seem to follow the path of sinners prosper?

Verse 1

Psalm 1:1 (NASB95) {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!

The word "bless" means to be happy or fortunate. However, when this word is applied to God then it refers to praise (See Gen. 9:26, Ps 28:6).

- *Psalm 28:6 (NASB95) {6} Blessed be the LORD, Because He has heard the voice of my supplication.*
- *Genesis 9:26 (NASB95) {26}He also said, "Blessed be the LORD, The God of Shem; And let Canaan be his servant.*

See also Matthew 5:1-12

The word “walk” means to pursue a course of action or way of life – to conduct oneself (behave).

- *Genesis 5:24 (NASB95) {24} Enoch walked with God; and he was not, for God took him.*
- *Genesis 6:9 (NASB95) {9} These are the records of the generations of Noah. Noah was a righteous man, blameless in his time; Noah walked with God.*

The word “counsel” means advice given or a policy/plan of action or behavior.

The word “stand” means to take up or maintain a specified position or posture (as in a particular state or situation).

The word “path” means a way of life, conduct, or thought.

“Sit in the seat” refers to being as the scoffers or scornful; conforming to their way.

See Ps 26:4-5, Jeremiah 15:17

- *Psalms 26:4-5 (NASB95) {4} I do not sit with deceitful men, Nor will I go with pretenders. {5} I hate the assembly of evildoers, And I will not sit with the wicked.*
- *Jeremiah 15:17 (NASB95) {17} I did not sit in the circle of merry-makers, Nor did I exult. Because of Your hand upon me I sat alone, For You filled me with indignation.*

We see here that a blessed person is characterized by the fact that he does not live a life as the unrighteous. He does not listen to the unrighteous to follow their ways, he does not live the unrighteous lifestyle, and he does not abide with the unrighteous to “be” one of them.

Verse 2

Psalms 1:2 (NASB95) {2} But his delight is in the law of the LORD, And in His law he meditates day and night.

This same blessed person delights in the law of the Lord and he meditates on it day and night

See also Psalm 119: 14, 16, and 35

- *Psalms 119:14 (NASB95) {14} I have rejoiced in the way of Your testimonies, As much as in all riches.*
- *Psalms 119:16 (NASB95) {16} I shall delight in Your statutes; I shall not forget Your word.*
- *Psalms 119:35 (NASB95) {35} Make me walk in the path of Your commandments, For I delight in it.*

The word “meditate” means to engage in contemplation or reflection, to focus one’s thoughts on God’s word (in this context), or to ponder.

The blessed person does not live a lifestyle of the unrighteous and he delights in the word of God. Because he delights in the word of God he ponders it throughout the day.

Consider the things that you delight in and how you think about it a lot. I am reminded of Matthew 6:19-24, 6:33.

See also Psalm 119:1, 55, and 97

- *Psalm 119:1 (NASB95) {1}How blessed are those whose way is blameless, Who walk in the law of the LORD.*
- *Psalm 119:55 (NASB95) {55}O LORD, I remember Your name in the night, And keep Your law.*
- *Psalm 119:97 (NASB95) {97}O how I love Your law! It is my meditation all the day.*

Question:

How can we delight in something if we have not been exposed to it? How can we delight in the word of God if we do not know the word of God? In order to delight in the word of God we must know what it says so that we can see how important it is to us and how much we really need it.

Verse 3

Psalm 1:3 (NASB95) {3}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.

The word “planted” implies being settled or established.

The phrase “shall prosper” means to make prosper or to bring to perfection.

The phrase “rivers of waters” refers to a mode of irrigation in the Middle East. Canals were dug in every direction where water would reach all of the vegetation. Egypt used this method a lot by channeling water from the Nile.

References to this practice can be found at Ezekiel 31:3-4, Proverbs 21:1, and Ecclesiastes 2:5-6.

- *Ezekiel 31:3-4 (NASB95) {3}‘Behold, Assyria was a cedar in Lebanon With beautiful branches and forest shade, And very high, And its top was among the clouds. {4}‘The waters made it grow, the deep made it high. With its rivers it continually extended all around its planting place, And sent out its channels to all the trees of the field.*
- *Proverbs 21:1 (NASB95) {1}The king’s heart is like channels of water in the hand of the LORD; He turns it wherever He wishes.*
- *Ecclesiastes 2:5-6 (NASB95) {5}I made gardens and parks for myself and I planted in them all kinds of fruit trees; {6}I made ponds of water for myself from which to irrigate a forest of growing trees.*

This last verse seems to say that the blessed person described in the preceding verses will prosper in whatever he does.

This sounds unbelievable because there is so much pain, suffering, and struggling in the world.

Questions:

1. Are we so far off the mark that we are not living in the realm described in this passage of scripture?
2. What if ultimately we are not living a godly life as described here? What if we are not following God's way and therefore not experiencing the blessedness and prosperity described here?

Things to Think About

How does one walk according to God's way? It appears that the key to walking according to God's way is to bind yourself to him and know his word. As one can be influenced by the unrighteous and find oneself living that lifestyle, one can also be influenced by the word of God and find oneself living according to it.

How does one meditate on God's word? We said that meditation means to ponder or to contemplate. Therefore, we should think about God's word regularly as we think about something else that we deem important or very valuable. This of course means that we have to be exposed to the word of God so that we can ponder it. This pondering or contemplating isn't a mental exercise alone as the Holy Spirit will help us in spiritual matters.

How can we not follow the way of the unrighteous? It appears that not following the way of the unrighteous can be accomplished by following the way of the righteous. If we are busy doing "A" then we won't be doing "B" at least not as much. As "A" consumes us then "B" dissipates from our lives one step at a time. The key I believe is to let the word of God dominate us in our thinking and consequently in our actions.

This is a process in my opinion. I don't think that a person can wake up one day and be totally dominated by the word of God. It takes determination until the word of God IS our lifestyle and everything else is uncomfortable at best.

The blessed person does not walk in the counsel of the ungodly, nor stand in the path of sinners, nor sit in the seat of the scornful because he is too busy delighting in and meditating on the word of God.

What is prosperity in the context of this passage? There are some who would interpret prosperity to be the accusation of wealth. However, prosperity should be interpreted based on the illustration provided. A tree prospers when it does what it was designed to do. An apple tree prospers when it produces apples and it does it abundantly. Therefore, we can be said to prosper if we produce the fruit that we were designed to produce ("its fruit in its season").

Prosperity with regards to God's way should not be construed as the accumulation of wealth and power. Instead prosperity should be construed as abundantly producing what God has ordained you to produce. Prosperity in this context could be seen as design fulfillment.

Does this mean that we should take a vow of poverty so that we can be fulfilled? No. It simply means that we should pursue God and live our lives according to what he has ordained. This means that we have to seek him and live according to his word. It also means that we are free to be ourselves because God made us the way he wanted us.

I am reminded of 1 John 5:14-15, Mark 11:22-24

Mark 11:22-24 (NASB95) {22}And Jesus answered saying to them, "Have faith in God. {23}"Truly I say to you, whoever says to this mountain, 'Be taken up and cast into the sea,' and does not doubt in his heart, but believes that what he says is going to happen, it will be granted him. {24}"Therefore I say to you, all things for which you pray and ask, believe that you have received them, and they will be granted you.

1 John 5:14-15 (NASB95) {14}This is the confidence which we have before Him, that, if we ask anything according to His will, He hears us. {15}And if we know that He hears us in whatever we ask, we know that we have the requests which we have asked from Him.

Some Lessons Learned

1. Pursue the way of God
2. Reject the way of the unrighteous
3. Learn how beautiful and valuable the word of God is and then delight in it
4. Pursue what you delight in, namely the word of God as the number one priority.
5. Be fulfilled in all that you do

We note that the unrighteous way is contrasted with the righteous in the remaining verses of this scripture.

Questions to Ponder

1. What does the righteous life look like in various situations?
2. What does God want from us (individually)?
3. What part do our decisions have to do with the lifestyle we follow and doing God's will?