

CH 1 – A Contrast of the Righteous and the Wicked

- Psa 1:1 Blessed is the man who walks not in the counsel of the wicked, nor stands in the way of sinners, nor sits in the seat of scoffers;
- Psa 1:2 but his delight is in the law of the LORD, and on his law he meditates day and night.
- Psa 1:3 He is like a tree planted by streams of water that yields its fruit in its season, and its leaf does not wither. In all that he does, he prospers.
- Psa 1:4 The wicked are not so, but are like chaff that the wind drives away.
- Psa 1:5 Therefore the wicked will not stand in the judgment, nor sinners in the congregation of the righteous;
- Psa 1:6 for the LORD knows the way of the righteous, but the way of the wicked will perish.



Structural Analysis:

This psalm is a contrasting parallel. The first three verses are about the righteous and are contrasted with the wicked in the next two verses. The final verse is a simple contrasting parallel summarizing the previous statements. This simple structure is very effective in defining "righteous" and "wicked". A modern vocabulary instructional technique is to explain what something is **and** what it is not. This provides a broad, well-rounded understanding of the word, which is exactly what has been done for us here.

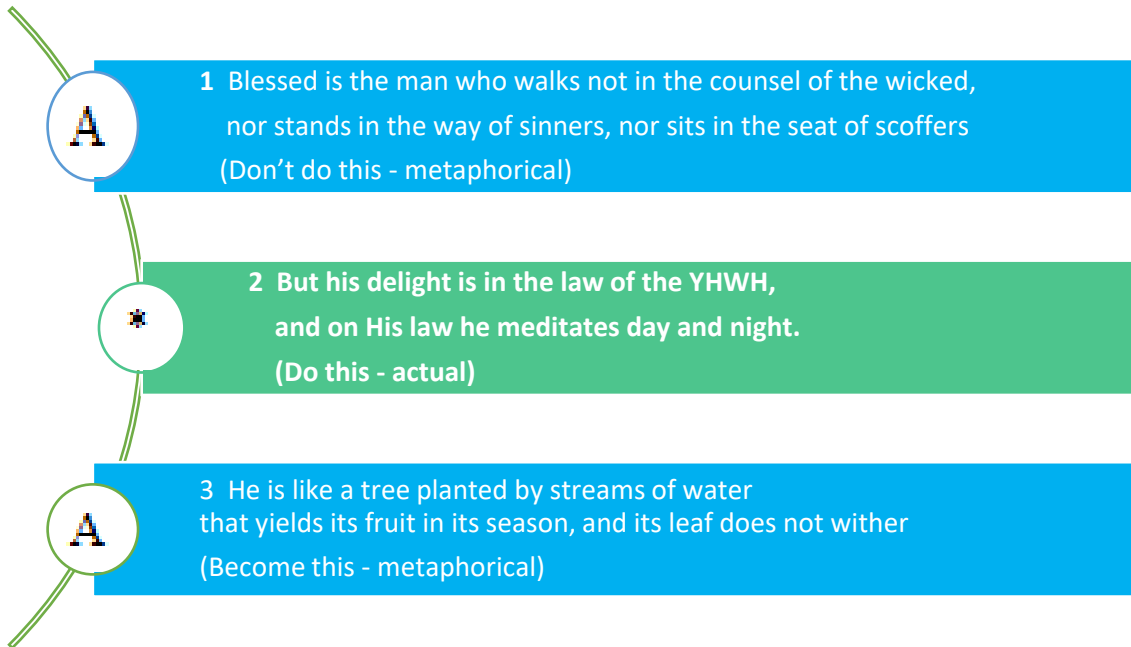
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|---|--------------------------------------|
| 1 Blessed is the man who walks not in the counsel of the wicked, nor stands in the way of sinners, nor sits in the seat of scoffers | (What the righteous don't do) |
| 2 But his delight is in the law of the YHWH, and on His law he meditates day and night. | (What the righteous do) |
| 3 He is like a tree planted by streams of water that yields its fruit in its season, and its leaf does not wither. In all that he does, he prospers. | (What the righteous do) |
| 4 The wicked are not so, but are like chaff that the wind drives away. | (What the wicked do) |
| 5 Therefore the wicked will not stand in the judgment, nor sinners in the congregation of the righteous; | (What the wicked won't do) |
| 6 For the YHWH knows the way of the righteous,
But the way of the wicked will perish. | |

Part A: About the righteous

Part B: About the wickedness

Complex Analysis:

The first three verses are a short chiasm with verse 1 and 3 using metaphorical language and verse 2 being what righteousness really looks like. The center (vs 2) is the point of this chiasm (remember the pebble). The center explains how we avoid the ways of the wicked and how to become trees planted by the waters. It states we should meditate on His law (instruction). Why is that important? For two reasons: 1) We need to meditate. Scripture is written in many layers. We need to meditate, to think deeply, in order to fully understand the fullness of the message YHWH has for us. 2) We need His instruction – Torah. How many times have you wanted a guidebook to life to help you through difficult times? Well, we have one, prepared for us before time and ready for us to walk in (Eph 2:10).



Interpretive Analysis:

In verses 1, 3, and 4-5 we have descriptions of people. Each description has three parts.

Vs. 1

- Does not walk in the council of the wicked
- Does not stand in the way of sinners
- Does not sit in the seat of the scoffers

Vs. 3

- Planted by streams of water
- Yields fruit
- (Leaf does not wither), prospers

Vs 4-5

- Blown away like chaff
- Will not stand in judgement
- Will not stand with the righteous

Let's search for the purpose of this structure:

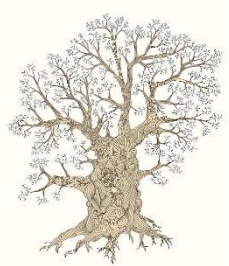
Descriptions	Explanation
Vs. 1 Does not walk in the council of the wicked Does not stand in the way of sinners Does not sit in the seat of the scoffers	The righteous are described in negative terms – what they DON'T do. They <u>don't</u> walk like the wicked. They <u>don't</u> stand like the wicked. They <u>don't</u> sit like the wicked.
Vs. 3 Planted by streams of water Yields fruit (Leaf does not wither) They will prosper	The righteous are described in positive terms - what they ARE. They are planted by streams of water. They yield fruit. They will prosper.
Vs. 4-5 Blown away like chaff Will not stand in judgement Will not stand with the righteous	The righteous <u>cannot</u> walk, stand, or sit like the wicked because the wicked <u>won't</u> walk, stand, or sit. They are blown around with the wind.

Let's dig a bit deeper. In the third verse we find a statement here that doesn't fit the pattern: Their leaf DOES NOT wither. That extra phrase "DOES NOT" breaks the pattern of 3 terms and the pattern of positive terms. A break in a pattern indicates it is worthy of consideration.

What do we know about withering leaves? First, within this psalm the withering leaf is contrasted with prospering and in vs 6 prospering is synonymous with being blessed. That indicates withering leaves are not prospering and are not blessed. If we do a quick survey of leaves, we see this representation is a theme throughout Scripture. Leaves are used to represent prosperity (or lack thereof) in relation to righteousness, not wealth (Prov 11:28, Isa 1:30, and Isa 64:6)

But let's go farther:

Matthew, Mark, and Luke recorded an event of the withered leaves of a fig tree (Matt 24, Mk 11, Lk 13)

Psalm 1:3	Fig Tree
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The righteous are like trees • The righteous bear fruit • If they do not, they will wither. • If they do, they will prosper (be blessed) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There is a tree (representing a person) • There is no fruit (not righteous) • It is withered (destroyed) • It is cursed <div style="text-align: right;">  </div>

What fruit do the righteous bear? The fruits of the Spirit (Gal 5:16-26). If we are not displaying

the fruits of the Spirit, then we are not prospering. We will be destroyed (See also the parable of the vine Jn 15:1-2).

But wait! There's more: there is a pattern of three all through this psalm. Three sets of descriptions, three phrases used in each description, three sets of descriptions of the righteous. Numbers have spiritual significance in Scripture. Three is the number of life. (See The Deeper Meaning of Numbers) Every aspect of this psalm is pointing to life: the pattern of three, the contrast between the withering wicked to the prosperous righteous, the use of trees (created on the 3rd day) to represent people. And Torah is at the heart. Again, the chiasmic points to the main idea - **Life comes through Torah!**

We see this in the fulfillment of the tree in the New Kingdom, where we will have eternal life:

Psalm 1:3	New Kingdom
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• The righteous are like trees• The righteous bear fruit• If they do not, they will wither.• If they do, they will prosper (be blessed)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• There is a tree (the tree of life)• The tree bears fruit (12 fruits every month)• The leaves are for the healing of the nations.

In the new kingdom, there will be a tree life whose fruits will be for the healing of the nations (Rev 22:1-2). Our fruits, if they are the fruit of the Spirit, are for the healing of the nations! Imagine a world with no kindness, no patience, no joy. Even today, by living the fruits of the Spirit, we are providing healing to the nations and it will be more true in the coming kingdom. What a beautiful plan YHWH has made!

This poem contrasting the righteous and wicked is really so much more. We learn what it looks like to be righteous. We learn that we must meditate on Scripture. We learn that life comes through Torah. We learn that our goal is to become that tree eternally producing fruit on the banks of the living water.

Psalm 1 prepares our heart for study and worship. It encourages us to be faithful to our calling so that we may live forever near the living waters in the kingdom to come. Unlocking the structural keys of Psalm 1 reveals these truths in profound and meaningful ways.

I pray that you delight in the word of YHWH, that you meditate on it day and night. And I pray that in response, you hear the voice of YHWH calling you to His purpose, His way, His kingdom.

Pro 25:2 It is the glory of God to conceal things, but the glory of kings is to search things out.