

## Psalm 1.

1. *Blessed are they who have not walked in the counsel of the wicked,  
nor lingered in the way of sinners,  
nor sat in the assembly of the scornful.*
2. *Their delight is the law of the Lord  
and they meditate on his law day and night.*
3. *Like a tree planted by streams of water bearing fruit in due season,  
with leaves that do not wither, whatever they do, it shall prosper.*
4. *As for the wicked, it is not so with them;  
they are like chaff which the wind blows away.*
5. *Therefore the wicked shall not be able to stand in the judgment,  
nor the sinner in the congregation of the righteous.*
6. *For the Lord knows the way of the righteous,  
but the way of the wicked shall perish.*

Blessed are those who trust in the Lord:  
**their delight is in the law of the Lord.**

Psalm 1 was added at a late date as an introduction to the Psalter. Its emphasis on the reward of virtue and the punishment of godlessness connects it with wisdom teachers in, for example, Proverbs, Job and Ecclesiastes. God's guidance, rather than human instruction, is the source of wisdom, which probably dates it from the reform of Ezra in around 400BC.

The psalm is made up of two parts, vv. 1-3 and 4-6. The first part describes the character of those who wins God's approval. They shun evildoers, refusing to direct their lives by those whom God condemns (the wicked). They refuse to follow those who wander from the road (sinners) or associate with the arrogant who sneer at God and people (scoffers).

Their lives are ruled by law, the guidance and instruction of God. This is not a burden, but a delight, a stable foundation for life. It is an idea found in Psalm 40:

'In the scroll of the book it is written of me that I should do your will:  
O my God I long to do it your law delights my heart.'

Then there is a picture of a tree, which suggests prosperity productivity and usefulness, an ability to endure the hardships of life, all made possible by the stream of God's guidance. This idea of a stream can be seen in Psalm 46, where there is a picture of water flowing out from the temple as a symbol of the presence of God going out from the temple to the world:

'There is a river whose streams make glad the city of God:  
the holy dwelling place of the Most High.'

The second part gives a contrast. showing the impermanence, worthlessness and meaninglessness, which characterise the wicked. They are like chaff, blown away by the action of God. They are found guilty, barred from the community of those with whom God is pleased.

In the last verse, there is another picture of a broad and safe path (way) followed by the righteous. The Lord knows it (it is under his protection) . in contrast with the path of the wicked, a desert trail, which leads nowhere.

So we are encouraged to be planted in the stream of God's love, which will lead us to growth and fulfilment, rather than an arid way in which we fail to progress. Which choice will we make, what kind of life do we wish for? Do we delight in the law of God?

## **Prayer**

Christ our wisdom,  
give us delight in your law,  
that we may bear fruits of patience and peace  
in the kingdom of the righteous.  
Amen.

(from Reflections on the Psalms)