

PSALM 1 – “The Godly and Ungodly Portrayed”

There are only two kinds of people on the earth as far as God is concerned. They are the godly and the ungodly. Is it possible for us to know who the godly and the ungodly are? Can we know by their religious activities such as going to religious places for worship or making annual pilgrimages to certain religious lands like Israel? Perhaps there is no way we can determine who is godly and who is ungodly? Maybe this knowledge belongs to God alone!

Psalm 1 reveals to us that man on earth is able to know who is godly and who is ungodly.

A. The Marks of the Godly – 1:1-3

- *He is considered blessed by God.* The word for blessed is more than just happy. The reason behind the happiness is emphasized. If the reason is not emphasized, one might think that the happiness is based upon some material blessings. The Bible is a spiritual book. It is not about materialism. If to be considered blessed by God means that he lives in a big house with plenty of money, and has a loving and fine family, then only the rich and powerful will be considered blessed. This is definitely not the case.

This blessedness is a happiness based upon the fact that he has a relationship with God. He knows he is going to Heaven. His eternal destiny is secure. The rest of the Psalm supports this explanation.

- *His associations are not sinful and he stays away from sinners.* The godly will not walk in the counsel of the ungodly. The ungodly will give advice but he will not listen. The word “walk” means “to follow a pattern or way of thinking.” He rejects the advice of the man who is morally wrong, i.e. the ungodly. He will not stand in the way of sinners. To stand with someone means that he identifies with the person’s mode of life. He takes a fixed position in life. These people are worse than the ungodly. They are called sinners i.e. guilty offenders. He will not sit in the seat of the scornful. The act of sitting means that he has established permanent residence and his desire and pleasure is that the deeds of these scorners are valuable and precious to him. When he sits in the seat of the scornful, he becomes one of them. When the scorner is out of town, he sits in his seat!

Note the progression of the actions and the evil men he must avoid. He must not walk with them. To walk means that he is still in motion. When he stops walking and begins to stand still, the identification begins. He stands with them and begins to listen to their evil talk. He is not ashamed to be standing with and talking to them. The third action is the worst. To sit down is normally a position of judgement or fellowship. When he sits in the seat of the scornful, he becomes one with them in all things.

Note also that the wicked person gets from bad to worse. The ungodly are just morally wrong. The sinners are guilty offenders. The scornful are those who know that they are morally wrong and guilty offenders, but they do not care and they are arrogant and boast about it.

This means that the godly is careful about his associations. His own actions he must control. Who his friends are reveal the state of his godliness or lack of it.

- *He delights in God's Word.* The law of his LORD gives him the greatest pleasure. He loves the word of his LORD. He obeys happily the law of his LORD. Day and night, he meditates in the law of his LORD. The law of his LORD occupies his mind all the time. Therefore he thinks like his LORD. He makes decisions based upon what his LORD thinks.

His life pleases his LORD because his life is to please his LORD. If he commits a sin, he repents. He does all things according to Holy Scriptures for this gives him the greatest delight. His will is subsumed under his LORD's will in all that he does and thinks. His motivation is his LORD's pleasure and happiness.

- *His life bears the marks of godliness.* The power of the law of his LORD transforms his entire life. He is like a tree planted by the rivers (note-plural) of water. All trees planted by a continuous flow of water never die. Trees also never stop growing. The godly never stop growing. He becomes more and more like his God. In God's time, the fruit of the Holy Spirit will be clearly seen in his life, thought and heart. Money cannot buy this supernatural experience.

He is not like any other tree but the everlasting tree where the leaves never die. He does not change with the season like many trees where the leaves fall during autumn season. His life is constant and does not change with the times. He will go through difficult times like everyone else but his trust and relationship with his LORD strengthens and deepens. He grows in his LORD regardless of the season, good or adverse circumstances - they make no difference to him. He knows his LORD and His LORD knows him. The conclusion is that his life is prosperous. He has the golden touch in all that he does.

Do not confuse this with material success. The godly is not interested in materialism for that is a sin. He knows that the love of money is the root of all evil. He will never exchange his delight for the law of his LORD for the mammon of the world. This is foolishness. Mammon is a dry riverbed. The tree that is planted beside the rivers of water never runs dry. His life is a blessing to others. Others see his good works and glorify God. To fellow godly believers he is an encouragement. To those who do not know his LORD they will glory God by becoming Christians themselves. His life has great spiritual value to all.

B. The Marks of the Ungodly – 1:4

- *He is the opposite of the above.* All that has been said above regarding the godly, the ungodly is not. He bears all the marks of ungodliness and sin. He is wicked and selfish and all he cares about is his own interest. He serves self. He takes advantage of all in order to make himself rich.

He hates the law of God. He considers the law of God a hindrance to his insatiable appetite for self-satisfaction. He is snared by self and sin. His principle for living is the lust of the eyes, the lust of the flesh and the pride of life. These evils motivate him and he delights in them all. His conscience is seared, for he does not care as long as he is happy and all others can suffer and be sad. Self-interest dominates his worldview of life.

His associations are sinners and all things sinful. He walks with them. He loves to be seen with them. He follows them like a puppy dog follows his master. He stands in their way to catch their behaviour and conduct. He wants very much to be like the sinners he adores. His gain and love are materialism. Mammon is his god and security. The more he has, the more he feels secure. The final step is to sit in their seat. He loves to be in the sinners' shoes so that others will idolize him the way he idolizes others. He scorns and mocks all who tell him otherwise. He becomes unteachable and set in his evil ways.

- *He is worthless in the sight of God.* The ungodly will become rich. He uses every way and means possible to get rich. All his waking moments are consumed by how to make more money. Self and mammon are his gods. He becomes his own god. He makes his god into his personal image. He dictates the terms for entrance into Heaven. He makes Heaven into his own image as well. Enough of filthy lucre is never enough for him. He is consumed by his own lusts. He is compared with the chaff that is worthless. During harvest time, wheat grain with its chaff has to be separated. In the olden days, many would go to a hill top where there is wind. The wind separates the grain from the chaff, i.e. the skin of the wheat. These would be tossed up into the wind and the wind would easily blow away the chaff, which is extremely light. The grain of the wheat would fall back down onto the tray. This goes on until all the chaff has been removed. The chaff is an unwanted nuisance to be thrown away. It is good for nothing.

When the ungodly dies, he loses all. He leaves this world naked just as he came into this world naked. That is why God considers such a life of self and consumerism worthless.

C. The Conclusion – 1:5-6

- *God condemns the ungodly.* The ungodly will perish forever. He thinks he owns materialism. However, he will one day realize that he has never been the master all along. Materialism owned him and he was the slave all along. However, by then it will be too late for his life is over. If he does not repent of his sins and turn to Christ as his Saviour and Lord before he dies, he will end up in Hell. His entire life will perish with him. He spends eternity in Hell.

Nevertheless, it is still not too late for him to repent of his sins and turn to Christ. As long as there is breath in his body, he can still repent. At least, he can save his soul although most of his physical life might be over.

- *God knows the righteous intimately.* God has a personal and intimate knowledge of all the godly. On the day of judgement, he will be called home to Heaven and to his LORD whose law he delights. He is at home in Heaven as the law of his LORD rules absolutely in Heaven. His way on earth is the same as his way in Heaven! He is very much at home in Heaven for his LORD is there. AMEN