

Psalm One: “The Two Ways”

Or...”The Eternal Breath Prayer”

¹Oh, the joys of those who do not
follow the advice of the wicked,
or stand around with sinners,
or join in with mockers.

²But they delight in the law of the LORD,
meditating on it day and night.

³They are like trees planted along the riverbank,
bearing fruit each season.

Their leaves never wither,
and they prosper in all they do.

⁴But not the wicked!

They are like worthless chaff, scattered by the wind.

⁵They will be condemned at the time of judgment.

Sinners will have no place among the godly.

⁶For the LORD watches over the path of the godly,
but the path of the wicked leads to destruction.

Overview Thoughts:

As the book of the Canticles is called the Song of Songs by a Hebraism, it being the most excellent, so this Psalm may not unfitly be entitled, the Psalm of Psalms, for it contains in it the very pith and quintessence of Christianity. What Jerome saith on St. Paul's epistles, the same may I say of

this Psalm; it is short as to the composure, but full of length and strength as to the matter. This Psalm carries blessedness in the frontpiece; it begins where we all hope to end: it may well be called a Christian's Guide, for it discovers the quicksands where the wicked sink down in perdition, and the firm ground on which the saints tread to glory.--*Thomas Watson's Saints Spiritual Delight*, 1660.

This whole Psalm offers itself to be drawn into these two opposite propositions: a godly man is blessed, a wicked man is miserable; which seem to stand as two challenges, made by the prophet: one, that he will maintain a godly man against all comers, to be the only Jason for winning the golden fleece of blessedness; the other, that albeit the ungodly make a show in the world of being happy, yet they of all men are most miserable.--*Sir Richard Baker*, 1640

I have been induced to embrace the opinion of some among the ancient interpreters (Augustine, Jerome, etc.), who conceive that the first Psalm is intended to be descriptive of the character and reward of the JUST ONE, *i.e.* the Lord Jesus.--*John Fry*, B.A., 1842

Vs. 1-3 The Way of the Godly

1. *ashrei* = oh the happinesses (plural of majesty; *cf.* the beatitudes *makarioi* = happy happy happy [blessed is SO weak compared to happy happy happy])

“follow” = walk in the ways of, hang out, on the fringes; avoiding the slight possibility of being contaminated

“stand” = take a stand, take a position, speak up

“join in” = sit down, get comfy, feel right at home

Rabbis = walked stood sat: “The verbs describe the ‘successive steps in a career of evil and form a climax: (a) adoption of the principles of the wicked as a rule of life; (b) persistence in the practices of notorious offenders; and (c) deliberate association with those who openly mock at religion.” (Kirkpatrick)

2 Word order important: “but rather, in the Torah of the Lord, [is] his delight”

“on His Torah he is meditating daily and nightly”

Hagah = onomatopoeic word (sounds the Rabbis made as they rocked back and forth reciting Torah)

Yomam valayla = all the time, every second

Joshua 1:7-8

3 *shatul* = transplanted NOT planted; moved from one place to another, Who is the Transplanter???

Tree image—Jeremiah 17:5-8

Rabbis: “Like a tree which draws its vitalizing moisture from a constant source, so the godly man derives strength of purpose from the unfailing Spirit of God. Fortified in this manner he may be buffeted by the troubles which overtake him, but he comes through them with unshaken resolve, like a firmly rooted tree which ‘even if all the winds in the world come and blow upon it, it cannot be stirred from its place’.” (Aboth iii.22)

Leaves never wither = evergreen

Vs. 4-6 The Way of the Ungodly

4 word order=not thus the wicked

Wicked = same word in vs. 1

chaff = the waste product which blow away, no roots or permanency

wind = *ru'ah* Gen 1:1-2

5 word order again: “therefore NOT they stand, the evil ones in the mishpat”

“evil ones” = same word in vs. *rosha'yim*

condemned = “they will not be left standing” different “stand” word than vs. 1

judgment = *mishpat* follows preposition *ba* “in the”

sinner *hatayim*

“congregation of the righteous ones”

6 word order again: “for He knows, YHWH, the way of the righteous ones”

“way” = *Derek* same word from vs. 1 – road, way of life, daily habits

“and the *Derek* of the evil ones shall perish”

In Conclusion

We began this class with my saying “Past is Prologue” and now we come full cycle to this.....

“One lesson and only one history may be said to repeat with distinctness: that the world is built somehow on moral foundations; that in the long run it is well with the good; in the long run it is ill with the wicked.” (Froude)

“The Gospel on Steroids” (SADenny)