

## The Two Trails of Life

### Psalm 1 (KJV)

**1** Blessed is the man that walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor standeth in the way of sinners, nor sitteth in the seat of the scornful. **2** But his delight is in the law of the Lord; and in his law doth he meditate day and night. **3** And he shall be like a tree planted by the rivers of water, that bringeth forth his fruit in his season; his leaf also shall not wither; and whatsoever he doeth shall prosper. **4** The ungodly are not so: but are like the chaff which the wind driveth away. **5** Therefore the ungodly shall not stand in the judgment, nor sinners in the congregation of the righteous. **6** For the Lord knoweth the way of the righteous: but the way of the ungodly shall perish.

### Kit Carson—Scout

Hampton Sides wrote a book about Kit Carson called *Blood and Thunder: The Epic Story of Kit Carson and the Conquest of the American West*. The truth of the matter is that Kit Carson was a man who was fleeing from the East to get away from the cities and the early spread of industrialization. He was very short in stature, somewhere around 5'4" tall, but he would be pressed into filling the role of a scout for wagon trains and the US Cavalry. To do this effectively, he had to learn the different trails of the West and understand the terrain. Because of this, history documents in multiple times where he was able to save an expedition, a wagon train, and even the US Cavalry, because of his knowledge of the trails. Some of the trails were developed and others were not, but he had the savvy to know what to do.

One of the chapters in the book is entitled "The Pathfinder" (ch. 9) and it describes how that because of Kit Carson's knowledge of some of the mountain passes in the California mountains he saved Colonel John C. Fremont's expedition. In fact, some historians believe that Fremont and his men would have died just as the Donner Party died in a horrible winter in the Sierra Nevada's just a few years later.

Hampton Sides writes this about Kit Carson:

As a tracker, he was unequaled. He knew from experience how to read the watersheds, where to find grazing grass, what to do when encountering a grizzly. He could locate water in a desert arroyo and strain it into potability. In a crisis, he knew tricks from staving off thirst—such as opening the fruit of a cactus or clipping a mule’s ears and drinking its blood.

Hampton Sides goes on to write how that Colonel John C. Fremont was called the Pathfinder during this time of his life, but he would have never survived without the skills of Kit Carson.

We all are on one of two paths in our spiritual walk. We are either on the path of godliness or ungodliness. Psalm 1, which is one of the Wisdom Psalms (along with 32, 34, 37, 49 and 119) shows us the dividing points between the two of them.

Wisdom Psalms are instructive psalms that provide practical guidelines for godly living and give to us pointed direction for righteous living in the pursuit of God’s will. They can often be compared with the Wisdom Literature of the Proverbs because of the teaching form by which it takes.

The NIV uses a word throughout the Psalms that is interchanged with path in the KJV, it is called “trail” or “trails.” Consider what we find with this word:

Psalm 1:1—Nor stand in the trail of sinners.

Psalm 16:11—You will make known to me the trail of life.

Psalm 27:11—Lead me in a level trail.

Psalm 36:4—He sets himself on a trail that is not good.

Psalm 119:34—Make me walk in the trail of Your commandments.

Psalm 119:105—A light unto my trail.

In other places, the word comes out in this manner:

Job 23:11—My foot has held fast to His trail.

Proverbs 4:14—Do not enter the trail of the wicked.

Proverbs 4:18—The trail of the righteous is like the light of dawn.

Proverbs 4:26—Watch the trail of your feet and all your ways will be established.

Proverbs 10:17—He is on the trail of life who heeds instruction.

Proverbs 15:19—The trail of the upright is a highway.

Proverbs 15:24—The trail of life leads upward for the wise.

Proverbs 16:17—He who watches his trail preserves his life.

Proverbs 16:25—There is a trail which seems right to a man but its end is the trail of death.

Matthew 7:14—For the gate is small and the trail is narrow that leads to life and there are few who find it.

In other words, what we must understand is there are two trails of life and we will walk down one or the other of them.

*“Blessed are the righteous who do not participate in the deceptions and defilements of this evil world and who internalize God’s Word.”* – Steven Lawson

The following outline is a very helpful one that I got from the Holman Old Testament Commentary, Psalms 1-75, General Editor Max Anders, Author Steven J. Lawson. I modified it very minimally.

## **The Path of the Godly**

### **Psalm 1:1-3 (KJV)**

**1** Blessed is the man that walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor standeth in the way of sinners, nor sitteth in the seat of the scornful. **2** But his delight is in the law of the Lord; and in his law doth he meditate day and night. **3** And he shall be like a tree planted by the rivers of water, that bringeth forth his fruit in his season; his leaf also shall not wither; and whatsoever he doeth shall prosper.

## **Satisfied in the Lord**

The idea of satisfaction comes from the use of the word blessed. Some biblical scholars believe that David was the author of Psalm 1-2. They believe that many of the psalms that he wrote he would begin and end the psalm with the word “blessed.”

Because of that thought when we read Psalm 1:1 and Psalm 2:12 we see that the word “blessed” is used to begin and end this passage. Several scholars believe

that Psalm 1-2 were uniquely used in the routines of worship that the Israelites gave themselves to.

Far too often there is a scoffing at the traditions and routines of the church and while there are some merits to the idea, it causes a deadening effect in some cases. I believe that there are some practices that we routinely give ourselves to that strengthen our walk with God.

It very well could be that when we sing the same songs and read the same scriptural passages that the repetition of it all just embeds it in our own souls so that we can “get” it. It would appear from Acts 13:33 (a cf. of Ps. 2:12) that this Psalm 1-2 were used in conjunction together during the times of worship for the early church.

We see a man in the first three verses who is satisfied in God, separated from the world, and saturated with the Word.

He is favored and blessed by God. The fact remains that God can bless whom He chooses to bless, but it appears that this favor and fulfillment in this godly man’s life is present because of his activity.

He will not walk in the counsel of the ungodly. He will not stand in the way of sinners. He will not sit in the seat of the scornful.

There are some great blessings that come through the virtue of avoidance.

If Aaron would have avoided the counsel of the mixed multitude there would have never been a golden calf. If Moses would have avoided his impulse of anger and struck the rock, he might have gotten into the Promised Land. If Samson would have avoided his lustful drives over Delilah, his outcome might have been different. If Saul would have refused to give in to his stubborn will and disobedience, his life might have ended better. If David would have avoided and stopped entertaining the thoughts of Bathsheba, he would have never entered his great sin.

If Judas would have avoided loving the money and instead loved the Savior, his life would have been far different.

There must be a great commitment and determination in our heart to maintain our blessing by simply doing what is right! What is right is the directions given to us by the Word of God.

### **Separated from the World**

On the other hand, the man who will be blessed does not just find himself in the mode of avoidance, but also in a mode of action; specifically, in his delight and meditation on the Word of the Lord.

The word “law” basically means that this man is to give himself to the instruction of the Word of God. God gives it to us as a guide for life and it is to be a delight to us. We are to desire it, to take pleasure in it, and to have a great passion for it.

In an age when everything is being questioned, we must understand that the Word of God is literally the words of God! We are convinced of the Bible’s claims as we read it. It is only through an inward work of the Holy Ghost that we will be convinced that it is indeed the Word of God.

People who have a strong conviction that the Bible is the Word of God (John 10:27; 1 Cor. 2:13-14) had this to develop as the Holy Ghost convicted and converted them as they read it. Most people who do not believe the Bible are those who do not read it.

### **Psalm 19:7-10 (KJV)**

**7** The law of the Lord is perfect, converting the soul: the testimony of the Lord is sure, making wise the simple. **8** The statutes of the Lord are right, rejoicing the heart: the commandment of the Lord is pure, enlightening the eyes. **9** The fear of the Lord is clean, enduring for ever: the judgments of the Lord are true and righteous altogether. **10** More to be desired are they than gold, yea, than much fine gold: sweeter also than honey and the honeycomb.

**Psalm 119:72 (KJV)** The law of thy mouth is better unto me than thousands of gold and silver.

**Job 23:12 (KJV)** Neither have I gone back from the commandment of his lips; I have esteemed the words of his mouth more than my necessary food.

### **Proverbs 6:22-23 (KJV)**

**22** When thou goest, it shall lead thee; when thou sleepest, it shall keep thee; and when thou awakest, it shall talk with thee. **23** For the commandment is a lamp; and the law is light; and reproofs of instruction are the way of life:

When the law of the Lord becomes a man's delight, he will meditate on it. The word meditate is from the Hebrew word, haga, which also means "to think." However, the Hebrews associated it with a low sound such as muttering and murmuring. Some historians note that it was quite common especially among the priests and Levites to hear them muttering under their breath as they went about their daily duties in the temple.

I cried to the Lord with my voice and He heard me—2:4

The Lord sustained me—2:5

I will not be afraid—2:6

Salvation belongs to the Lord—2:8

The Lord hath set apart him that is godly for himself—3:3

Lord, you make me dwell in safety—3:8

How excellent is Your Name in the all the earth—8:1

Start muttering those things under your breath or even silently in your heart and I have a feeling that it moves from praise and will progress to worship. But there is something else that happens to a man who meditates on the law. He will be separated from the world because...

Refuses secular beliefs... the counsel of the ungodly

Refuses sensual behavior... standing in the way of sinners

Refuses shameful belongings... never sits in a chair that will dishonor God and his calling

### **Saturated with the Word**

The Psalmist goes on to tell us of the benefits that comes to one who will meditate on the Law both day and night. While I would hope that we all have the understanding that there will be a final judgment where the faithful saint will be rewarded for his labors... We also must consider the fact that there are blessings that take place in the present.

The Psalmist describes this man as one who is like a tree that has managed to flourish on the river bank. His life does not depend on the rainfall and the ups and downs of the weather patterns as much. By his location, he has deep roots that have grown so that he draws from the Word.

He brings forth fruit. The leaves do not wither. He prospers under the blessings of God.

That is the goal of every saint of God. If ever there needed to be a time in history where the church needed this, it is now. People who are marked by stability in their walk, productivity in their prayer, consistency in their involvement, and prosperity in their soul are always going to be helpful for the Kingdom of God.

### **The Path of The Ungodly**

#### **Psalm 1:4-6 (KJV)**

**4** The ungodly are not so: but are like the chaff which the wind driveth away.

**5** Therefore the ungodly shall not stand in the judgment, nor sinners in the congregation of the righteous. **6** For the Lord knoweth the way of the righteous: but the way of the ungodly shall perish.

the man who is on the path of the ungodly is pictured like a chaff which is the dry husks that are around the grain. It is a dry, scaly material that wraps around the fruit and is good for nothing, but to be tossed to the wind.

The picture here is what takes place at the winnowing during the harvest. The threshed corn is taken and tossed up for the husks and fragments of straw to blow away, leaving behind only the grain.

It's a picture of a man who lives an empty, worthless, and godless life. If only they could see this! Instead they mock godliness and righteousness because of their internal corruption.

They say godliness is foolishness. They say that the righteous never have any fun. They say that the godly are wasting their lives.

The world shouts out, “If you want to amount to something and enjoy yourself while you are doing it, get on the fast track of sin. Reach out to whatever whim you desire and do it. Take all you can and be happy!”

But Romans 1 gives us the picture of the man who is on this downward spiral:

**Romans 1:25 (KJV)** Who changed the truth of God into a lie, and worshipped and served the creature more than the Creator, who is blessed for ever. Amen.

There is a sad outcome that will ultimately catch up with them and that is that they are condemned in judgment by God. The ungodly will not stand in judgment with hope nor will he gain a place among the righteous!

The way of the ungodly shall perish! What does that mean? To perish is used in many senses. In Psalm 1, it gives the indication that it is a road or course that comes to nothing or to ruin. In other places in the Bible it has this meaning:

Hopes or plans that are frustrated—Ps. 112:10; Prov. 11:7

Creatures that get lost—Ps. 119:176

Men whose achievements come to grief—Ps. 2:11; 9:6

We cannot afford to take this path!

### **What Path Are You On?**

Are you in the danger of walking in the counsel of the wicked? Are you standing in the way of sinners?

Or...

Are you reading and delighting in the Law of God? Are you bearing fruit that can only come from God and His Word?