

Psalm 1

The Creator God desires to communicate with us and desires that our prayers are genuinely from the heart, **not** superficial in their contents using well-worn lines recited for years with a cliché or two. There is no doubt that God hears such efforts at communicating with Him but knows it is **not** from the heart.

To help us with our prayers, at the very centre of His Word, the Christian Bible, God has given us a great collection of songs of praise, and prayers that express the heart and mind of human beings who were living a life that was in His presence.

Acts 13:22 [NIV] *“After removing Saul, he made David their king. He testified concerning him: ‘I have found David son of Jesse a man after my own heart; he will do everything I want him to do.’”*

Seventy-three Psalms are ascribed to King David and fifty-one anonymous Psalms could also be the work of King David. Two are directly mentioned in the New Testament as being Psalms of David, Psalm 2 [**Acts 4:25-26**], Psalm 95 [**Hebrews 4:7**].

King David and the other writers honestly pour out their true feelings, reflecting a dynamic, powerful and life-changing friendship with the Creator God.

The psalmists confess their sins, express their doubts and fears, asking God for help in times of trouble and express heartfelt praise and worship.

Throughout the Psalms there are certain major themes that are repeated.

Praise – Many Psalms are songs of praise to the Creator God, thanking Him for sustaining and redeeming us.

The praise recognises God’s greatness. Focusing our thoughts on the greatness of God moves us to praise Him. The more we come to know the Creator God, the more we can appreciate what He has done for us.

God’s Power – God is all-powerful and He always acts at the right time. He is sovereign over every situation. God’s power is shown by the way He reveals Himself in creation, history and His Word, the Christian Bible. When we feel powerless in any situation, God can help us. His strength can overcome the despair of any pain or trial. We can always pray that He will deliver, protect and sustain us.

Forgiveness – Many Psalms are intense prayers asking the Creator God for forgiveness. God does forgive us when we confess our sins and turn from them. [**1 John 1:8-10**]

Because the Creator God does forgive us, we can pray to Him honestly and directly. When we receive His forgiveness, we move from alienation to intimacy, from guilt to love.

Thankfulness – We are grateful to the Creator God for His personal concern, help and mercy. Not only does He protect, guide and forgive us, but His creation provides everything for our needs as a physical human being. When we realise how much we benefit from having an intimate relationship with our Creator God, we can then fully express our thanks to Him. By thanking Him often, and for all our benefits, we develop spontaneity in our prayer life.

Trust – The Creator God is faithful and just. When we put our trust in Him, He brings peace to our hearts and minds. Because He has been faithful throughout the history of humanity, we can trust Him in times of trouble. People can be unfair and friends may desert us, but we can trust God for He is always there in every situation, and that He will deal with us justly.

While the Psalms are not organised by topic, it is helpful to compare the dominant themes in each section of the Psalms to the five books of Moses.

Book 1: Psalms 1:1 – 41:13 – mainly written by King David, is similar to the book of Genesis.

Just as Genesis tells how humanity was created, fell into sin, and was promised redemption, many of the Psalms discuss humans as blessed, fallen and redeemed by God.

Psalms 1:1 [NIV] *“Blessed is the man who does not walk in the counsel of the wicked or stand in the way of sinners or sit in the seat of mockers.”*

The writer of the Psalm begins by extolling the joys [Hebrew word is “*esher*” meaning blessed, from a root word meaning to go forward with honesty and prosperity] of obeying God and refusing to listen to those who discredit or ridicule Him. [**Proverbs 4:14; Jeremiah 15:17**]

Our friends and associates can, often in very subtle ways, have a profound influence on us. If we insist on friendships with those who mock what God considers important, we might become indifferent ourselves to God’s will for our lives. Such an indifferent attitude is the same as mocking the Creator God’s way of life.

This first Psalm well serves as an introduction to the whole collection of Psalms, for it deals with the character and condition, and future destiny of the pious and the wicked are described and contrasted, teaching that true piety is the source of ultimate happiness and sin is the source of ultimate misery.

Psalms 1:2 [NIV] *“But his delight is in the law of the LORD, and on his law he meditates day and night.”*

The Hebrew word translated “*delight*” is “*chêphets*” meaning desire for a valuable thing. This is the attitude we should have towards the Creator God’s Word, the Christian Bible, and the laws for right living we find within its pages.

The fact we meditate on it all the time shows that we see God’s Word as a thing of great value.

Knowing and meditating on God’s Word, the Christian Bible, are the first steps towards making it the guide to our everyday life.

Psalms 1:3 [NIV] *“He is like a tree planted by streams of water, which yields its fruit in season and whose leaf does not wither. Whatever he does prospers.”*

The simple wisdom of these three verses is the more we delight in God’s presence, the more fruitful our lives will become, the major “*fruits*” being those that become ours through the active indwelling of the Holy Spirit. [**Galatians 5:22-25**]

When we see the word “*prosper*” in scripture it does **not** mean immunity to failure or difficulties. The Hebrew word is “*tsâlach*” meaning to move forward, to break out of a detrimental situation.

This does **not** guarantee health, wealth and happiness but it does mean we have God’s approval because we are producing the character of God, listed in the “*fruits*” of the Holy Spirit.

This is something that is eternal, not what we have to leave behind at the time of our physical death.

Psalms 1:4 [NIV] *“Not so the wicked! They are like chaff that the wind blows away.”*

By contrast, the wicked are worthless chaff, the outer shell that is removed to get at the valuable kernels of the grain.

Chaff was removed by a process called threshing and winnowing.

After the plants were harvested they were crushed and the pieces were tossed into the air where the light chaff was carried away by the slightest wind, while the good grain falls back to the earth.

Chaff is a symbol of a faithless life that drifts along without any direction.

Good grain is a symbol of a faithful life that can be used by the Creator God.

Unlike the winnowed grain, we can choose the direction we can take in life.

Psalms 1:5 [NIV] *“Therefore the wicked will not stand in the judgment, nor sinners in the assembly of the righteous.”*

Chaff, the wicked, are worthless, and possess **no** stability, drift in the wind of the world’s deceived society [**Revelation 12:9**], and are helpless before the divine judgement of Jesus Christ. [**2 Corinthians 5:10**] Nor will such people be part of the created family [kingdom] of God. [**Revelation 21:7-8; Revelation 22:14-15**]

The chaff [wicked] are of **no** value in God’s accounting, however highly they may value themselves.

The chaff are for a while with the valuable grain but at Jesus Christ’s coming He will separate the chaff from the grain.

Luke 3:15-17 [NIV] *“The people were waiting expectantly and were all wondering in their hearts if John might possibly be the Christ. John answered them all, ‘I baptise you with water. But one more powerful than I will come, the thongs of whose sandals I am not worthy to untie. He will baptise you with the Holy Spirit and with fire. His winnowing fork is in his hand to clear his threshing-floor and to gather the wheat into his barn, but he will burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire.’”*

John is warning of this impending judgement by comparing those who refuse to live God’s way as chaff. By contrast, he compared those who repent and reform their lives to the nourishing wheat itself. Those who refuse to be servants of the Creator God will be discarded because they have **no** value in furthering God’s work. Those who repent and believe are of great value to God, living a life of productive service for Him.

Psalms 1:6 [NIV] *“For the LORD watches over the way of the righteous, but the way of the wicked will perish.”*

The ultimate significance of these two alternative ways of life and thought is found in the attitude of Jesus Christ towards them.

2 Timothy 2:19 [NIV] *“Nevertheless, God’s solid foundation stands firm, sealed with this inscription: ‘The Lord knows those who are his,’ and, ‘Everyone who confesses the name of the Lord must turn away from wickedness.’”*

Jesus Christ knows those who are seeking to be like Him, and watches over and approves their character and conduct, guaranteeing for them a destiny in diametrical contrast to that of the wicked. [**John 3:16; Romans 6:23**]

The single theme of this Psalm is whatever shapes a person’s thinking shapes their life, present and future.

The two ways of life are shown, there will **never** be a third way of life. The choice is ours to make.