

The Two Paths

Psalm 1

Good morning.

Most of us here this morning, have heard of the metaphor, a "Fork in the road".

Of course, while driving there are actual forks in the road, where one road splits into two.

The metaphor of a "Fork in the road" can refer to a time when someone must choose between two options and that choice can also be called a crossroads in life.

An example of a "Fork in the road" is when someone has to choose between different schools to attend.

Robert Frost described this metaphor as "a road not taken", the moment before a decision was made, affecting someone's life.

Every "Fork in the road" choice that is made, will have consequences that can significantly impact someone's life.

Hallmark movies have storylines about **a road not taken** based on a choice a character in the movie made. An example...

If the lady in the movie had not broken up with her boyfriend before moving to New York, she would not have become an advertising executive and gotten engaged to a different guy.

The choice **against** the **first guy** was a **road not taken**.

Then the lady in the movie returns home to take care of her ailing mother and falls in love with her old boyfriend again.

Please open your Bibles to *Psalm 1*.

We are beginning a study in the *Book of Psalms* which will not be a complete chapter-by-chapter study, but more of a stroll through various *Psalms* over the next several months.

This morning, we will hear an introduction to the *Book of Psalms* and then we will cover *Psalm 1* and learn about the two paths offered to each of us.

I. Introduction to the *Psalms*.

The *Psalms* were the ancient hymnal of God's people as they were often set to music but, not always.

The emotions of the individual poets were expressed to God within the writings of the different *Psalms*.

Some of the *Psalms* name their author in the first line or title.

David was responsible for seventy-three of the *Psalms*, and Moses wrote *Psalm 90*.

Asaph wrote twelve of the *Psalms*, the descendants of Korah wrote ten, Solomon wrote one or two, and Ethan and Heman were responsible for two others.

The remainder of the *Psalms* do not contain information about their authors.

Warren Wiersbe said, “*The **Book of Psalms** has been and still is the irreplaceable devotional guide, prayer book, and hymnal of the people of God. The Hebrew title is “the book of praises”.*

Although the meaning of *Psalms* is, “songs of praise”, we need to know the book was written as **Hebrew Poetry**.

The Old Testament has several books considered to be Hebrew poetry, including five books that are called the "Poetic Books".

Job, Psalms, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, and Song of Solomon.

The only book entirely in poetic form is *Psalms*; as *Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel*, and the Twelve Minor Prophets contain mostly Hebrew poetry.

Hebrew Poetry is figurative, so as we interpret the different books, we must be careful, to interpret the *Psalms* correctly.

Hebrew Poetry uses a lot of repetition and connects one thought with another thought, known as **parallelism**. Again, this is helpful to understand as you study the *Book of Psalms*.

The Lord inspired all scripture to be written by many different human authors. In their writings, their personalities are shown.

2 Timothy 3:16 All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness,

2 Timothy 3:17 that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work. NKJV

Some Hebrew poetry can be correct doctrine, but while interpreting poetry, we have to remember that the Lord allows feelings to be expressed, that are **not** doctrinal truths.

Some *Psalms* are not written as doctrinal letters like Paul's letters. Some *Psalms* are emotional expressions and often "overstated" not to lie, but they are poetry expressing emotion.

The psalmist said in *Psalm 94:3 LORD, how long will the wicked, how long will the wicked triumph?*

Psalm 94:4 They utter speech and speak insolent things; all the workers of iniquity boast in themselves.

Psalm 94:5 They break in pieces Your people, O LORD, and afflict Your heritage.

Psalm 94:6 They slay the widow and the stranger and murder the fatherless.

Psalm 94:7 Yet they say, "The LORD does not see, nor does the God of Jacob understand." NKJV

We know it is not doctrinally true that *"The LORD does not see, nor does the God of Jacob understand."*

We must understand the Lord allowed the Psalmists to express emotions with poetry that **may or may not** be proper doctrine.

Today, we will study the first *Psalms* and discuss the person who is happy because they are living according to the Lord's plans, compared to the ungodly person.

II. Oh, how happy.

Read *Psalm 1:1*

Psalm 1 was written by King David and is called the “Preface *Psalm*”, which gives a **snapshot** of the entire *Book of Psalms* with the six verses of *Psalm 1*.

Blessed is the man means, oh how happy or content is the person, but it also means to be right or straight.

Proverbs 3:5 Trust in the LORD with all your heart, and lean not on your own understanding;

Proverbs 3:6 In all your ways acknowledge Him, and He shall direct your paths. NKJV

James Boice said, “*Blessed means supremely happy or fulfilled. In fact, in Hebrew the word is actually a plural, which denotes either a multiplicity of blessings or an intensification of them.*”

If we are not happy, blessed, content, and going on a straight path in our lives, it is because we are receiving ungodly counsel, on the path of sinners, or we’re sitting in the seat of the scornful.

1. *Where does ungodly counsel come from?*

We can receive ungodly counsel from the enemy, other people, the world, and even our own flesh.

1 John 2:16 For all that is in the world — the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life — is not of the Father but is of the world.

1 John 2:17 And the world is passing away, and the lust of it; but he who does the will of God abides forever. NKJV

Seeking wise counsel is always recommended for the follower of Christ but we must use the Holy Spirit and the Word of God as our plumb line to reveal what is true.

So, the happy, blessed, and content person of God does not walk in the counsel of the ungodly.

2. What is the path of sinners?

A path can be interpreted as a road, direction, or a way.

AC/DC sang a song that said, “*I am on the Highway to Hell.*”

Proverbs 14:12 There is a way that seems right to a man, but its end is the way of death. NKJV

We are in the world, but we must be separated from the world.

A righteous man does not travel in the same direction as sinners.

Christians swim **upstream** and take a less-traveled way because we know it leads to blessing, contentment, and eternal life.

Christians face "Forks in the road" all the time when we must choose between two options.

Unfortunately, the choices that seem to be the easy way are usually not easy and they will leave us regretting our choice.

Choices in life have consequences and our choices can have a significant impact on our life and walk with Christ.

Jesus said in *Matthew 7:13*, “**Enter by the narrow gate; for wide is the gate and broad is the way that leads to destruction, and there are many who go in by it.**

Matthew 7:14 **Because narrow is the gate and difficult is the way which leads to life, and there are few who find it. NKJV**

Follow Jesus and He will always lead you to the right path.

3. What is the seat of the scornful?

Have you heard the term, Monday morning quarterback?

The world, the ungodly, and some backslidden people love to sit and **criticize** those who are trying to walk on the Lord’s path.

Isaiah spoke of a time when right will be wrong and wrong will be called right.

Paul told Timothy in *2 Timothy 4:3*, **For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine, but according to their own desires, because they have itching ears, they will heap up for themselves teachers;**

2 Timothy 4:4 **and they will turn their ears away from the truth, and be turned aside to fables. NKJV**

It is easy to join in and criticize people who are serving the Lord when you have a different idea of how things should go, but it is wrong to be part of **the scornful**.

If a Christian is not sinning in their endeavor, let them be accountable to the Lord for their actions.

III. A fruitful tree.

Read *Psalm 1:2-3*

Delighting in the Word and meditating on the Word go hand in hand.

Meditating means to *utter, speak, devise, muse, study, chew the cud, or imagine.*

Delighting in the Word of God means it brings you enjoyment. We can measure our delight in the Word of God by how much we **hunger** and thirst for it.

C.H. Spurgeon said, “*Man must have some delight, some supreme pleasure.*”

His heart was never meant to be a vacuum. If not filled with the best things, it will be filled with the unworthy and disappointing.”

Joshua 1:8 This Book of the Law shall not depart from your mouth, but you shall meditate in it day and night, that you may observe to do according to all that is written in it. NKJV

When a Jewish person would study the Word of God, they would read it out loud, consider its meaning, and memorize it for themselves.

King David said in *Psalm 119:11, Your word I have hidden in my heart, that I might not sin against You. NKJV*

Someone once said the Bible will keep you from sin or sin will keep you from the Bible.

Re-read *Psalm 1:3*

David Guzik said, “*It isn’t that the righteous man has a “Midas Touch,” and everything he does makes him rich and comfortable.*

*But in the life of the righteous man, God brings forth something good and wonderful out of everything. Even tough circumstances bring forth something that **shall prosper.**”*

There are other passages in scripture that refer to the Word of God as water.

Ephesians 5:26 that He might sanctify and cleanse her with the washing of water by the word,

Ephesians 5:27 that He might present her to Himself a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing, but that she should be holy and without blemish. NKJV

A tree that is planted by a river has a constant water source and will not wither away from a lack of water.

Wiersbe said, “*In Scripture water for drinking is a picture of the Spirit of God while water for washing pictures the Word of God.*

Thirst for water is an image of thirst for God and the river is often a picture of God’s provision of spiritual blessing and help for His people.”

*“We can’t nourish and support ourselves; we need to be **rooted** in Christ and drawing upon His spiritual power.”*

John 15:5 "I am the vine, you are the branches. He who abides in Me, and I in him, bears much fruit; for without Me you can do nothing. NKJV"

I like to eat fresh blackberries and whenever I look for a blackberry bush with lots of fruit, I know I need to look for a plant near a stream or another water source.

The person who is blessed and delights in the Word of God will bear fruit.

Trees that are planted by the water tend to have deeper roots and are able to withstand the storms that happen.

Notice the promise, ***“That brings forth its fruit in its season, whose leaf also shall not wither; and whatever he does shall prosper.”***

For a Christian, being blessed doesn’t necessarily look like what the world believes are blessings.

Our blessings from Jesus are much more than the material, blessings the world seeks after. The world has no hope, so they place their hope on **material** things.

Yes, the Lord will provide for all of our needs from His riches in glory, but this life is simply preparing us for eternity, so our hope is not in material things but in Christ.

God desires to bless us in the heavenly places, with peace, joy, and eternal life which are so much more than temporal blessings.

By trusting Him, following Him, surrendering to His will, and meditating on His word, we receive blessings beyond compare.

Christians are blessed with God's **presence**, peace, joy, love, hope, grace, eternal life and so much more, when we are planted by the River of God!

Authentic fruit is not produced but comes from the life of God flowing through us and blessing others around us.

IV. The ungodly.

Read *Psalm 1:4-6*

Earlier we read in *Psalm 94:3, LORD, how long will the wicked, how long will the wicked triumph?*

Sometimes we look at the ungodly of the world and like the Psalmist, we ask how they can be so blessed.

But remember from our Philippian study, Paul said...

Philippians 3:18 For many walk, of whom I have told you often, and now tell you even weeping, that they are the enemies of the cross of Christ:

Philippians 3:19 whose end is destruction, whose god is their belly, and whose glory is in their shame — who set their mind on earthly things. NKJV

The wicked may prosper in this world, but their prosperity will be short-lived.

When thinking about the temporary riches of the wicked, believers need to have their minds set on things above where Jesus is seated, and someday, we will join Him for eternity.

King David said the ungodly are like chaff. Chaff is separated from the grain at harvest and the wind usually blows it away.

Spurgeon said chaff is worthless, dead, unserviceable, without substance, and easily carried away.

There is a huge difference between a tree planted by the water and chaff which will be blown away.

Speaking of Jesus, John the Baptist said in *Matthew 3:12*,

“His winnowing fan is in His hand, and He will thoroughly clean out His threshing floor, and gather His wheat into the barn, but He will burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire.”

Wiersbe said, *“There is a coming day of judgment, and the Lord, the Righteous Judge, will separate the wheat from the tares, the sheep from the goats, and the trees from the chaff...*

...and no unbeliever will be able to stand in the assembly of the righteous.”

There are clearly two paths and clearly two destinies: one for the blessed righteous person and the another for the ungodly.

“Nor sinners in the congregation of the righteous” is true in the future, because unsaved people will have no part in the glorious future promised to Christians.

There is a present application as well. Unsaved people are not comfortable ***in the congregation of the righteous*** because they insist on remaining in sin apart from God.

Re-read ***Psalm 1:6***

Hebrews 4:13 there is no creature hidden from His sight, but all things are naked and open to the eyes of Him to whom we must give account. NKJV

The two different ways. First, the positive aspect of ***the Way of the righteous***. Remember, a path can be interpreted as a road, direction, or a Way.

The word, ***“know”*** means *to perceive and see, find out and discern to discriminate, distinguish, or to know by experience.*

Jesus has distinguished His children from the ungodly. I am known by my King and He loves me.

Next the negative, ***the Way of the ungodly shall perish.***

Matthew 7:22 Many will say to Me in that day, 'Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in Your name, cast out demons in Your name, and done many wonders in Your name?'

Matthew 7:23 And then I will declare to them, 'I never knew you; depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness!' NKJV

V. Practical Application.

This *Psalm* began with the word *blessing*, (Oh how happy or content) and ended with *the way of the ungodly shall perish*.

A "Fork in the road" refers to a time when someone must choose between two options and the choice to be made can also be called a crossroads in life.

Choices in life have consequences that can have a significant impact on someone's life.

A path can be interpreted as a road, direction, or a Way.

Proverbs 14:12 There is a way that seems right to a man, but its end is the way of death. NKJV

The *Book of Acts* refers to Christianity as *the Way*.

John 14:6 Jesus said to him, "I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me. NKJV

We all are given the choice to know and serve the Lord Jesus Christ and remember, choices all come with consequences.

There are clearly two paths and clearly two destinies: one for the blessed righteous person and another for the ungodly.

And once we know Jesus we will want to delight and meditate on His Word to be fed by Him and to grow to know Him more.

Delighting in the Word of God means it brings you enjoyment.

We can measure our delight in the Word of God by how much we **hunger** and thirst for it.

As a tree planted by the water of the Word of God, we will naturally bear fruit as we allow Jesus to love us and love others through us.

God desires to bless us with peace, joy, and eternal life which are so much more than temporal blessings.

Christians are blessed with God's presence, peace, joy, love, hope, grace, eternal life and so much more when we are planted by the River of God!

I can think of many times during my life where I reached a fork in the road, but some forks are more significant than others.

Re-read *Psalm 1:6*

Believers who are not following closely or surrendering to the leading of the Spirit, are not Oh how happy and content.

If you want to be blessed, we are all faced with a fork in the road decision as what to do with Jesus and His free gift of salvation.

Jesus endured the Cross, was dead, buried and rose to life on the third day. Now that you have been given this information, you are faced with a decision.

Whether you realize it or not you are at a fork in the road decision that has eternal consequences.

Today is the day of salvation.