

Psalm 1

How to Be Happy and Blessed in Life, Psalm 1:1-6

What Do You Do When You Come to a Fork in the Road? (The Blessed Person Is the Righteous Person)

3. (Psalm 1:4-5) Understand the unhappy and wicked.

Psalm 1:4-5 NKJV

⁴The ungodly *are* not so, But *are* like the chaff which the wind drives away.

⁵Therefore the ungodly shall not stand in the judgment, Nor sinners in the congregation of the righteous.

In sharp contrast to the enduring blessedness of the righteous is the fleeting worthlessness of the ungodly. Nothing could create a better image of permanence than the flourishing tree planted by the river. Nothing could be more unstable and transitory than the chaff now cited in comparison.

a. They are like chaff: Blown about by the winds of judgment (v. 4).

Psalm 1:4 NKJV

⁴The ungodly *are* not so, But *are* like the chaff which the wind drives away.

Chaff is a common illustration in Scripture of those things that are worthless, temporary, and short-lived. (Matthew 3:12; Job 21:18; Psalm 35:5; Isaiah 29:5; Hosea 13:3).

Matthew 3:12 NKJV

¹²His 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.”

Job 21:18 NKJV

¹⁸They are like straw before the wind, And like chaff that a storm carries away.

Psalm 35:5 NKJV

⁵Let them be like chaff before the wind, And let the angel of the Lord chase *them*.

Isaiah 29:5 NKJV

⁵“Moreover the multitude of your foes Shall be like fine dust, And the multitude of the terrible ones Like chaff that passes away; Yes, it shall be in an instant, suddenly.

The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia explains its significance:

In the process of winnowing [wheat], as it has been carried on in the East for thousands of years, the grain is tossed into the air so that the wind may cause a separation of chaff and straw. The light husks from the wheat and fine particles of straw are dispersed by the wind in the form of a fine dust; the heavier straw which has been broken into short pieces by the threshing process falls near at hand on the edge of the threshing-floor, while the grain falls back upon the pile....This straw is ordinarily saved and fed as ‘roughage’ to the animals. It could easily be gathered and burned...while the chaff is blown away beyond recovery, a strong figure to depict complete annihilation.

The towering tree is firmly established in fertile soil (v. 3).

Psalm 1:13 NKJV

³ He shall be like a tree Planted by the rivers of water, That brings forth its fruit in its season, Whose leaf also shall not wither; And whatever he does shall prosper.

Its deep, huge roots drink abundantly from the flowing river by which it is planted. Its leaves are lush and green, and its limbs hang heavy with sweet, juicy fruit. It stands undaunted when storm clouds gather on the horizon, for it is rooted ever so deeply and can withstand the strongest of winds. This image depicts the godly man or woman.

The chaff of the wheat, in contrast, is weightless and worthless, without substance and without value. When it is tested, it quickly and easily scatters. It cannot withstand the slightest of breezes, much less the violent gusts of the raging storm. Gone! Here one second, then vanished, never to appear again. This is the ungodly person, the man or woman who does not know the Lord.

b. They doom themselves (v. 5).

Psalm 1:5 NKJV

⁵ Therefore the ungodly shall not stand in the judgment, Nor sinners in the congregation of the righteous.

The **wind** is a symbol of God's judgment upon every individual (v. 4). As the feathery chaff cannot survive the stormy gales, the ungodly person will not be able to stand in the day of God's coming judgment. John the Baptist preached this same message to the Pharisees and Sadducees:

Matthew 3:12 NKJV

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."

Excellent commentator H.C. Leupold explains the judgment referred to in this verse:

Though it may be true that throughout life those who have turned from God must experience many a setback and defeat in which they are not able to maintain themselves...this word seems to refer primarily to one outstanding judgment which is the climax of them all, and whose verdicts are ultimate, the final judgment.

On that glorious yet dreadful day when the righteous are assembled together for eternal bliss with the Lord, the ungodly will be eternally banished from God's presence.

Chaff closely resembles wheat and is difficult to distinguish from it. The picture is that of false believers who pretend to be a part of God's righteous congregation. Hypocrisy was the heart of John's scathing sermon to the Pharisees and Sadducees (Matthew 3:7-12).

Matthew 3:7-12 NKJV

⁷ But when he saw many of the Pharisees and Sadducees coming to his baptism, he said to them, "Brood of vipers! Who warned you to flee from the wrath to come?

⁸ Therefore bear fruits worthy of repentance,

⁹ and do not think to say to yourselves, 'We have Abraham as *our* father.' For I say to you that God is able to raise up children to Abraham from these stones.

¹⁰ And even now the ax is laid to the root of the trees. Therefore, every tree which does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire.

11 I indeed baptize you with water unto repentance, but He who is coming after me is mightier than I, whose sandals I am not worthy to carry. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire.

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.”

Their fruits (works, deeds) were not those of a righteous *tree* or person. Scripture teaches that on the day of God’s final judgment all unbelievers will be unmasked and identified as chaff by their works:

Revelation 20:12 NKJV

12 And I saw the dead, small and great, standing before ^[a]God, and books were opened. And another book was opened, which is *the Book of Life*. And the dead were judged according to their works, by the things which were written in the books.

Unbelievers will be eternally doomed on that dreadful day. They will be violently scattered by the fierce winds of God’s unrestrained wrath. They will be forever ejected from the presence of the righteous and hurled into the lake of fire:

Revelation 20:15 NKJV

15 And anyone not found written in the Book of Life was cast into the lake of fire.

Thought 1. What does the future hold for the ungodly? Tragically, their prospects are both bleak and terrifying. Every person we meet is going to spend eternity in hell *unless* he or she receives the salvation and life that Christ offers. As believers, Christ commissions us to spend our lives and resources reaching those who face the eternal doom of judgment. We must accept this responsibility—love people enough to overcome our fears and tell them about Christ. Our family members, neighbors, co-workers, and friends will perish eternally if they do not repent of their sins and believe in Christ. How can we claim to truly love them without trying to reach them with the gospel?

Part of the fruit we bear as believers is the souls we bring into the family of God. A special reward—the crown of rejoicing—awaits us if we faithfully obey the Savior’s command to win the lost (**1 Thessalonians 2:19**).

1 Thessalonians 2:19 NKJV

19 For what is our hope, or joy, or crown of rejoicing? *Is it not even you in the presence of our Lord Jesus Christ at His coming?*

Matthew 13:49 NKJV

49 So it will be at the end of the age. The angels will come forth, separate the wicked from among the just.

Romans 1:13 NKJV

13 Now I do not want you to be unaware, brethren, that I often planned to come to you (but was hindered until now), that I might have some fruit among you also, just as among the other Gentiles.

Revelation 6:17 NKJV

17 For the great day of His wrath has come, and who is able to stand?”

Proverbs 11:30 NKJV

30 The fruit of the righteous is a tree of life, And he who wins souls is wise.