

COMMENTS ABOUT THE RIGHTEOUS AND THE WICKED

(PSALM 1)

- PART 1 - Two Types of People; Two Different Lifestyles
 - PART 2 - A Look at Our Motives: Why Do We Serve God?
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PART 1 - TWO TYPES OF PEOPLE; TWO DIFFERENT LIFESTYLES

1) This Psalm places *all* people into two categories. Each of these categories stands in radical contrast to the other. No other category exists.

This is important to understand, because it means that you belong to one of these two categories. The distinction between these two groups may often be blurred, because we live in a world filled with contradiction and with people living inconsistent lives. Yet the Day of Justice will come, in which everything will be seen for what it truly is. There will be no pretension or hiding the truth on that day.

2) Notice also that this Psalm is a description. It mentions *facts*; it does not give *commands*. The blessed one *does* these things. He does not consider them just one of many "options" to choose from.

Many people seem to think that they can belong to the "blessed" category, even though the things mentioned in this description are *not* a part of their lives. Many people have no "delight" in "the law of the LORD" - much less a delight in it "day and night" (v. 2). Some don't even acknowledge the distinction between God's ways, and those of the wicked, yet they still think that they have a *right* to experience the blessings of the righteous! What does the psalmist say? "**NOT SO!**"

PART 2 - A LOOK AT OUR MOTIVES: WHY DO WE SERVE GOD?

We need to examine the motives and desires of our hearts - the reasons we serve God.

Psalm 1 describes the blessings that come to the person who serves God - it focuses on the *facts* about that person. Other passages give us *commands* to focus on God and his Word - and some of them promise blessings for doing so (example: Joshua 1:8). Yet either way, we must remember that these passages tell us to focus on *God*, and not on *ourselves* (and our selfish desires)!

The primary reason that we are to love and serve God is because of who *he* is and what *he* has done, not because of the positive benefits that we might receive from doing so. *God would deserve to be worshiped and served even if we didn't get blessed!*

Do we love God because he is worthy of our attention, or because we think we will get a reward for doing so? Do we treat his blessings like a bribe? (Satan claimed this was Job's motive for serving God - Job 1:8-1; 2:3-5. In Job's case, the accusation proved false.)

God knows our motivations and our hearts - whether they are God-centered or self-centered. Pray that God will purify our hearts and motives from any wrong reasons we may have for serving him. Then we will *truly* be like the blessed one of Psalm 1.

It is not sinful for us to desire a blessing. The problem occurs when our desire for being blessed becomes more important to us than our desire to give God what he deserves. (Remember this: All of us have sinned against God. God deserves our honor and praise, but we *don't* deserve God's blessings! If we get them, it is because of God's *grace* - his *underserved* kindness.)

PART 3 - THE ISSUE OF INCONSISTENT LIVES

In an inconsistent world, we must face the issue of inconsistent living. It will not be long before a person discovers that the characteristics of "the blessed one" are not present *all* of the time in his life. That, in itself, is not a sufficient reason for him to conclude that he is *not* one of the righteous. It is when these things do not in any way describe him (or when they hardly do so), that there is a good reason to be concerned.

The righteous one - though not completely perfect in all he does - *will* have such desires, at least to some degree. And these desires will increase as he progresses through life, because God is working in him to make him more "Christ-like."

This is true, not only of one's desires, but of his actions - the *results* of those desires. If the Spirit of God is present, *something* will happen. There will be at least *some* evidence that the Spirit is present! If God is working to make the individual more "Christ-like" (and he does this with *all* who belong to him) there *will* be at least some increase in the "fruit of salvation" in the individual's life! (See John 15.)

Many passages in the Bible stress the difference between the righteous and the wicked (including the wicked who temporarily appear to be righteous). If you are uncertain about the differences, here are some passages to read:

1 John emphasizes how to know that you are truly a child of God. Merely "believing" you are saved is not sufficient. If the believing is genuine, certain actions and attitudes will be present.

2 Peter emphasizes how to make one's calling and election sure (chapter 1), as well as the need to *grow* in the grace and knowledge of God (chapter 3). In contrast, those who

do *not* do these things are described as having been trapped by error - and this will result in their eternal destruction (chapters 2-3).

James emphasizes a lifestyle that is evidence of a *living* faith. A worthless, dead "faith" doesn't have such a lifestyle.

The words of Jesus (in the gospels) emphasize the cost of discipleship, the necessity to *live* in accordance with the truth, and much more.

Those who do not belong to God will not have the type of blessings that God offers to his people. They may experience some types of blessings, since God shows kindness even to the wicked (Matthew 5:45b; Romans 2:4), but it will be temporary and limited, at best. (It will definitely *not* be eternal!) Those who *do* belong to God will discover that, at times, their lives do not have all the characteristics of "the blessed one." They may discover that they have fallen into sin, or have neglected to follow Jesus the way they ought.

If either of these situations describes you, do not ignore or suppress that knowledge. Take things seriously (and objectively), and admit the situation to God. If you have been unsuccessfully trying to do what the blessed one does, do not give up in despair.

First, thank God for your awareness of the problem - an awareness which many who are perishing do not have! Then begin to focus some of your attention on God and his Word... and pray that the Holy Spirit will cause that Word to have an effect on your life and attitudes. Keep to it, even though you do not get immediate results, and though at times do not "feel" like continuing, but would rather give up and quit. On some days, you will have more success than on others. Realize this at the start, and you may find it easier to fight discouragement, if it comes. Remember that your goal is long-term, and not merely focused on today or tomorrow.

If there are issues you need to deal with, in your relationship to God, the way you respond to your situation will reflect what is truly in your heart.

- The one person - described as "wicked" - may be convicted in his conscience, and may even try to make some of the changes he *knows* should be present in his life. But sooner or later, his efforts will lose "momentum" and he *will* eventually quit trying to deal with the issue.
- The other - the blessed one - may stumble over and over again; but each time, he will get back on his feet and continue in the way God has called him to follow. After all, God is working within him to accomplish great things! (Philippians 1:6) Even his willingness to keep getting back on his feet is evidence that God is at work in his life! (Philippians 2:13)