

## Introduction

- It hasn't happened very often since Helen and I have been married:
  - particularly with the boys around!
  - but **on a few occasions I've been left home alone** while Helen and the boys have been away
  - at her mum's, or sometimes at SU camp...
- While I always look forward to having them back, there's **often one thing I'm a little nervous about**:
  - I generally have a **list of things to do** while Helen is away!
  - and one of them is usually **to look after Helen's plants!**
- She definitely has the **green fingers....**
  - and as a consequence **I always hope I've done it right...!**
- For those plants need the right conditions to grow and prosper; good soil, warmth, light, and of course, water. Their roots need to be able to draw up all the nutrients and water they need to grow.
- **Psalm 1** quite possible written quite deliberately as an **introduction** to stand at the beginning of the collection that is the Psalms:
  - a **song book of the later OT people**, collected down through the years from the pens of the likes of David and Asaph, and others unnamed
- Bit like one of our hymn books:
- a **collection of different styles** and **themes** for **different occasions**, written by a **variety of different authors**, some of whom are more prolific than others! (**Wesley; Kendrick!**)
- Psalm 1 stands at the head of this collection, **setting the tone** for all the rest that are to come...
  - so let us spend a little time sinking our roots down into God's riches stored up for us here.

## Exposition

- This is essentially a **Psalm of contrasts**:
  - or rather, of one deep contrast painted in different images, drawn out in different ways
- The contrast between **God's way**, and how we find that way and live that way, and **the way of those who reject God's path**, who ignore the light he has given and stumble on by themselves.

### Verse1

- **"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."**
- So in v.1 we have a **threefold warning** of the way of people opposed to God:
  - **first**, there is the **danger posed by their advice**, the counsel - for it is advice without reference to God. It has not firm anchor - it is untrustworthy;
  - **second**, there is the **danger posed by their example** - not simply their advice, but by seeing what they do;
  - **thirdly**, the **pressure they exert to adopt their attitude** - not merely the odd action here and there, but a whole outlook on life opposed to God's ways.
- It's a **warning** - but a warning couched really very **positively**:
  - happy, blessed is the person who avoids these dangers, these pressures!
  - **it is possible to resist; and it is the better way!**

### Verse2

- **But his delight is in the law of the LORD, and on his law he meditates day and night.**
- As we move into v.2, we find the **first of the contrasts**:
- Psalmist turns his attention **away** from the path to be avoided and **onto** the path to be followed, **away** from the ways of evil men and **onto** the path laid before one who would follow God.

- And that road leads directly to God's word.
- Notice the similarity with the charge that Joshua was given as he took over leadership of God's people from Moses:
  - "Do not let this Book of the Law depart from your mouth; meditate on it day and night, so that you may be careful to do everything written in it. Then you will be prosperous and successful." (Joshua 1:8)
- An on-going theme of Scripture is our need to steep ourselves in these words from God.

### Verse3

- 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.
- All this talk of reading, studying, meditating on God's word could sound very dry, boring, perhaps even overly intellectual.
  - but that's very far indeed from the Psalmist's mind
- You see, he has a picture of the effect God's word can have on someone's life:
  - someone who has shaped their life.... where they look for advice, who they look to as examples, and where they take their attitudes... on God's word is like a tree
- But not just any tree:
  - not a small, broken down tree; not a diseased tree, rotten inside and ready to fall over!
  - no, a tree deep-rooted in the perfect spot
- Palestine - dry - hot - trees drink an amazing amount of water - a big oak tree will draw up hundreds of gallons a day!
  - the perfect spot for a tree is beside an assured source of water - green leaves, perfect, juicy fruit, all at the right time
- Get the source right - get the roots into that source, the damp soil beneath the stream - and what a tree!
- Psalmist paints a picture of health, vitality for the one whose life is rooted in God, and in his ways as Scripture unpacks them.

### "A Bible that is falling apart is usually read by someone who isn't!"

- Puzzle: "They succeed in everything they do" - literally?
  - no, not in the first sense that comes to our minds... exams, jobs, relationships
  - but in the perspective of eternity, yes
- God's way is always the right way, the best way - even when it is not the easiest way, nor the way that brings obvious, immediate rewards.
- In some things, it becomes clear that God's ways are best, are most "successful"
  - take the statistics that suggest that couples who live together or sleep together before they get married are vastly more likely to split up later than those who don't;
- But in others, it is less clear:
  - missionaries and others who give up much but see scant reward;
  - people whose honesty loses them money, or for whom doing the right thing seems to bring pain and loss rather than reward.
- Yet remember Jesus' words:
  - "What good is it for a man to gain the whole world, yet forfeit his soul?" (Mark 8:36)

### Verse4

- Not so the wicked! They are like chaff that the wind blows away.
- The next verse casts a bit more light, as the Psalmist extends his picture.
- He's drawing another contrast - on the one hand those who obey and put into practise God's laws are like a deeply rooted tree, firm and steady, bearing fruit;
  - on the other hand, what are evil men like?

#### Chaff:

- the little bits of waste wheat round the head that get blown away in the wind at winnowing

- not even the really useful straw further down that can be used for bedding
- but *the stuff that just disappears off into the wind*
- And that's the picture that starts to cast some light on our puzzle:
  - for *it is when the wind comes* that the chaff is blown away, and the real wheat, the fruit of the crop, is found.
  - ultimately, *its only in eternity, when God sifts out the grain*, when separates the sheep and the goats, the folk whose names are written in His book of life and those whose names are not, that we will see the real value of our lives.
- *Its only when the wind comes.*
  - maybe just now we grow weary of doing good, of taking the harder path of truth, of integrity, of honesty, of morality, of service
  - wouldn't it be easier to compromise?
- Take heart from this picture of deep rooted goodness; of real life, of real fruitfulness - of lives grounded in Scripture, rooted deep in God's standards, in his loving relationship with his people.

### Verse5

- *Therefore the wicked will not stand in the judgment, nor sinners in the assembly of the righteous.*
- So in v.5 the Psalmist really just says in *plain language* what he's just said in *picture language*:
  - *those who do not follow God's path, who insist on staying in command of their own lives and not bowing to him, will be condemned, and they will be separated from God's people, and from God himself*
- That is the ultimate consequence of rejecting God's word

### Verse6

- *For the LORD watches over the way of the righteous, but the way of the wicked will perish.*
- So, he finishes with the contrast in its plainest terms:
  - the *righteous*, not righteous of themselves but of God's free gift, now gladly responding in faith and seeking to live lives glorifying to God, *they are guided and protected by God, brought at last to his side*;
  - on the other hand, those who reject His ways have stepped outside God's protection, and brought on themselves his righteous judgement - *they are on their way to their doom*

## Conclusion

- So, there is presented here the basic choice that exists for all who have, in faith, turned to follow God:
  - will we follow his way or, having started to follow, will we turn back and accept the advice of evil men, follow the example of sinners, and adopt the attitude of the scoffers?
  - *his way or our way; Scripture's way or the way everyone in the world is heading?*
  - the way of *life*, or the way of *death*; the way of *growth* or the way to being *parched*?
- There is that vivid, rich picture - of the blessed man, the happy person, deep rooted in God's word.
  - a vision, a goal to aim for!
- But the Psalm is not simply about grand visions - it speaks too to our everyday situation:
  - *points towards our soaking our lives in Scripture's perspective*;
  - *reading, thinking about it, mulling it over, going back and reading it again*;
  - *becoming familiar with God's ways of dealing with people* - so we'll recognise them when we encounter them for ourselves;
- **How?**
  - Have your Bible open as we read together here in church - read, listen, soak it

in;

- those who preach here do not set out to preach their own thoughts, but seek always to explain and explore God's Word, and its relevance and impact on our lives
- so why not keep your Bible's open, seek to **make the connections** between what whoever is preaching is **saying** and the **passage** (and if you can't follow, ask! - for its as likely we've not said something clearly as that you've mis-understood!);
- read the Scriptures for yourself each day if you can; simply reading will be of benefit, though if you can also find a way of spending more time and thinking a bit about the passage you read, all the better (SU and other notes - go to Wesley Owen or CLC!!);
- always ask yourself: what is the main point of this passage? what does it teach about God? is there a promise or a command, a warning or an example to take special notice of? how does this passage help me understand myself, my situation, and the way I relate to others?

- **Plant your roots deep - for you will not be left empty if you fill up on God's word:**

Happy are those who reject the advice of evil men,  
who do not follow the example of sinners  
or join those who have no use for God.  
Instead, they find joy in obeying the Law of the Lord,  
and they study it day and night.  
They are like trees that grow beside a stream,  
that bear fruit at the right time,  
and whose leaves do not dry up.  
They succeed in everything they do.

(vs. 1-3, GNB)