

# Psalm 1:4-6 Commentary

PREVIOUS

Psalm 1:4 The [wicked](#) are not [so](#), but they are like [chaff which the wind drives away](#). ([NASB: Lockman](#))

**English Translation of the Greek** (Septuagint): Not so the ungodly;-- not so: but rather as the chaff which the wind scatters away from the face of the earth.

**Amplified:** Not so the wicked [those disobedient and living without God are not so]. But they are like the chaff [worthless, dead, without substance] which the wind drives away. ([Amplified Bible - Lockman](#))

**KJV:** The ungodly are not so: but are like the chaff which the wind driveth away.

**NET:** Not so with the wicked! Instead they are like wind-driven chaff. ([NET Bible](#))

**NJB:** How different the wicked, how different! Just like chaff blown around by the wind ([NJB](#))

**Young's Literal:** Not so the wicked: But--as chaff that wind driveth away!

## THE WICKED ARE NOT SO BUT THEY ARE LIKE THE CHAFF WHICH THE WIND BLOWS AWAY:

- Like chaff - Ps 35:5; Job 21:18; Is 17:13; 29:5; Hosea 13:3, Mt 3:12

### A STRIKING CONTRAST

**The wicked** - The psalmist addresses them and their effect on the godly and their ultimate fate (Ps 1:1, 4, 5, 6). Clearly the **wicked** represent those who do not believe in Jesus (see their eternal fate in Ps 1:6b).

**Wicked** ([07563](#))(*rasha'*) is an adjective meaning unrighteous, unjust, an evil person, wrong wicked, guilty (legally not innocent of a violation of the law - Ex 23:1, Ps 109:7), in the wrong, criminal, transgressor. **Rasha'** often describes unbelievers, who hate God and are habitually hostile toward Him. The **wicked/ungodly** conduct their lives as if God does not exist and with no regard for Him.

**Spurgeon** - In this verse the contrast of the ill estate of the wicked is employed to heighten the coloring of that fair and pleasant picture which precedes it

Note that it takes **two verses** to describe the secret of the godly life but it only takes **two words** to describe the life of the ungodly - **not so!** The English rendering of the Greek Septuagint is even stronger - **Not so, the ungodly, not so!**

**Not so** - Not what? They are led by the counsel of the wicked, in the way of sinners, in the seat of scoffers. Not blessed. Not like trees firmly planted. Not bearing (spiritual) fruit in season. Not remaining "green" in times of drought. Not prospering in all they do (speaking primarily of spiritual prospering for the things of this world will pass away, but only those things done in the saint abiding in the Vine of Christ Jesus will endure. Cp John 15:5)

What a contrast. Godliness is gain here and glory hereafter. Purity pays in this world and paves the way to Paradise in the world to come.

**Guzik** -Everything true about the righteous man (stable as a tree, continual life and nourishment, fruitful, alive, and prosperous), is **not so** regarding the ungodly. It may often seem like the ungodly have these things, and sometimes it seems they have them more than the righteous. But it is **not so!** Any of these things are fleeting in the life of the ungodly; it can be said that they don't really have them at all.

**Ray Pritchard** - The whole truth about the human race is found in just two words: **'Not so.'** Not so the wicked. They are not like the righteous and therefore have no part in the promised blessing. Because they do not follow God's Word, but have chosen a different path, God's estimation of them is entirely different.

**Steven Cole** - The psalmist describes the wicked in contrast to the righteous. The righteous is like a sturdy tree--rooted, firm, fruitful. The wicked is like chaff from the wheat--rootless, weightless, useless. This is not man's view. From our viewpoint, many who leave God out of their lives are glamorous, powerful, exciting people. Rather, this is God's view, as verse 6 shows. God's view takes

eternity into account and says, "Those who leave Me out of their lives are like chaff." They have no sub-stance. They may be great before men, but before God they will be blown away like chaff in the final judgment. ([Psalm 1 How To Live Happily Ever After](#))

**Matthew Henry** sums up the entire life and accomplishments of the ungodly man or woman (the unsaved or unregenerate person) ...

**Not so** the ungodly; they are **not so**; they are led by the counsel of the wicked, in the way of sinners, to the seat of the scornful; they have no delight in the law of God, nor ever think of it; they bring forth no fruit but grapes of Sodom; they cumber (Ed: an archaic word meaning to trouble or harass as brambles *cumber* a garden) the ground.

**But - Always be alert for this term of contrast, and at the bare minimum ask "What is the writer contrasting?" (Why?, What is the change of direction?, etc).**

**Spurgeon** writes...

And we are hereby to understand that whatever good thing is said of the righteous is not true in the case of the ungodly. Oh! how terrible is it to have a double negative (Not so the ungodly; not so) put upon the promises! and yet this is just the condition of the ungodly.

Mark the use of the term "**ungodly**," for, as we have seen in the opening of the Psalm, these are the beginners in evil, and are the least offensive of sinners. Oh! if such is the sad state of those who quietly continue in their morality, and neglect their God, what must be the condition of open sinners and shameless infidels? The first sentence is a negative description of the ungodly, and the second is the positive picture.

Here is their character—"they are like chaff," intrinsically worthless, dead, unserviceable, without substance, and easily carried away.

Here, also, mark their doom,—"**the wind drives away**;" death shall hurry them with its terrible blast into the fire in which they shall be utterly consumed.

**Like** - Whenever you encounter a phrase introduced by "**like**" (or "**as**"), it is most likely a **term of comparison**, and more specifically a **simile**.

**Like chaff** - Scripture uses **chaff** to picture that which is useless, worthless or evil, including (as in Psalm 1) wicked persons that are about to be destroyed.

Mt 3:12 "And His winnowing fork is in His hand, and He will thoroughly clear His threshing floor; and He will gather His wheat into the barn, but He will burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire."

**Scott Grant** - Chaff, unlike a firmly planted tree, is separated from its source of life. A tree bears fruit, but chaff is disconnected from the fruit it surrounded. The destiny of chaff, unlike the leaves of the firmly planted tree, is to wither. The psalmist compares impotent activity with fruitful contemplation.

**Ray Pritchard** - The wicked are ultimately insubstantial. **Chaff** refers to the husk or hull that surrounds a nut or a kernel. It seems quite strong, but once the nut has been removed, it is light and insubstantial. Take a peanut in the shell and crack it open. After you eat the peanut, what do you do with the shell? If you are at a ballgame, you toss the shells on the ground where they are pulverized into dust. That's what the wicked are like in the eyes of the Lord. They look so powerful on earth, but to God they are like dust that is quickly blown away. And their "wisdom" is like chaff, changing every day, new theories, new ideas, new beliefs. Nothing solid, nothing definite. Because the wicked live for themselves, they don't know right from wrong or good from bad. Learn from this that life without God is useless, empty, trivial, and worthless. Vanity of vanities, all is vanity. If a man lives for a hundred years and yet does not know God, he is just a piece of useless chaff! Blown away and forgotten!

**Richard Baxter** offers an interesting thought on **chaff**...

Here, by the way, we may let the wicked know they have a thanks to give they little think of; that they may thank the godly for all the good days they live upon the earth, seeing it is for their sakes and not for their own that they enjoy them. For as the **chaff** while it is united and keeps close to the wheat, enjoys some privileges for the wheat's sake, and is laid up carefully in the barn; but as soon as it is divided, and parted from the wheat, it is cast out and scattered by the wind; so the wicked, whilst the godly are in company and live amongst them, partake for their sake of some blessedness promised to the godly; but if the godly forsake them or be taken from them, then either a deluge of water comes suddenly upon them, as it did upon the old world when Noah left it; or a deluge of fire, as it did upon Sodom, when Lot left it, and went out of the city.

**Noah Webster's 1828 dictionary** has this note on the definition of **chaff**...

1. The husk, or dry calyx of corn, and grasses. In common language, the word is applied to the husks when separated from the corn by thrashing, riddling or winnowing. The word is sometimes used rather improperly to denote straw cut small for the food of cattle. Martyn. Encyc.
2. Refuse; worthless matter; especially that which is light, and apt to be driven by the wind. In scripture, false doctrines, fruitless designs, hypocrites and ungodly men are compared to chaff. Ps. 1:4. Jer. 23:28. Is 33:11. Mat. 3:12. (Webster, N. Noah Webster's First Edition of An American Dictionary of the English language. Reprint of the 1828 ed)

**Which the wind blows away** - **Spurgeon** writes that **chaff** is "Intrinsically worthless, dead, unserviceable, without substance, and easily carried away."

**Guzik** - **Chaff** was light enough that it could be separated from the grain by throwing a scoopful into the wind and letting the wind drive away the **chaff**. This is how unstable, how lacking in substance, the ungodly are.

**Matthew Henry** - they are like the **chaff** which the wind drives away, the very lightest of the chaff, the dust which the owner of the floor desires to have driven away, as not capable of being put to any use. Would you value them? Would you weigh them? They are like chaff, of no worth at all in God's account, how highly soever they may value themselves. Would you know the temper of their minds? They are light and vain; they have no substance in them, no solidity; they are easily driven to and fro by every wind and temptation, and have no steadfastness. Would you know their end? The wrath of God will drive them away in their wickedness, as the wind does the chaff, which is never gathered nor looked after more. The chaff may be, for a while, among the wheat; but he is coming whose fan is in his hand and who will thoroughly purge his floor. Those that by their own sin and folly make themselves as chaff will be found so before the whirlwind and fire of divine wrath (Ps. 35:5), so unable to stand before it or to escape it, Isaiah 17:13.

## TWO WAYS TWO RESULTS

In summary, the psalmist draws out a dramatic horticultural contrast between a well watered **tree** and worthless **chaff**! This picture should jog any thinking person's mind and cause them to pay careful attention to the wisdom of the psalmist. But of course not all will read and heed because of their deceived minds and stubborn, rebellious wills. When I was in elementary school I memorized a poem by **Robert Frost** which greatly disturbed me (I was not a believer at that time), especially his closing stanza...

### THE ROAD NOT TAKEN

I shall be telling this with a sigh  
Somewhere ages and ages hence:  
Two roads diverged in a wood, and I--  
I took the one less traveled by,  
And that has made all the difference.

**Frost's** poem certainly mirrors the theme of Psalm 1 which effect contrasts two continual conducts which invariably yield two distinct destinies. Frost's first stanza is interesting

Two roads diverged in a yellow wood,  
And sorry I could not travel both  
And be one traveler, long I stood  
And looked down one as far as I could  
To where it bent in the undergrowth;

In other words, in this short life there are only two roads. There is no middle ground. Every man and woman will walk down one road or the other.

The sobering words of Frost recall the even more solemn words of the Savior, who describes three arresting arithmetic analogies all based in their essence on the number **two**.

## TWO WAYS/GATES

**Matthew 7:13** (note) "**Enter** (aorist imperative = Do this now! It is urgent!) by the narrow gate; for the gate is wide, and the way is broad that leads to destruction, and many are those who enter by it. 14 "For the gate is small, and the way is narrow that leads to life, and few are those who find it.

## TWO TREES/FRUITS

**Matthew 7:15** (note) "**Beware** (present imperative) of the false prophets, who come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly are ravenous wolves.

16 "You will know them by their fruits. Grapes are not gathered from thorn bushes, nor figs from thistles, are they?

17 "Even so, every good tree bears good fruit; but the bad tree bears bad fruit.

18 "A good tree cannot produce bad fruit, nor can a bad tree produce good fruit.

19 "Every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire.

20 "So then, you will know them by their fruits.

## TWO DESTINIES/ENDS

Matthew 7:21 (note) "Not everyone who says to Me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the **kingdom of heaven**; but he who does (present tense = not perfectly but as their general lifestyle) the will of My Father Who is in heaven.

22 "Many will say to Me on that day, 'Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in Your name, and in Your name cast out demons, and in Your name perform many miracles?'

23 "And then I will declare to them, 'I never knew you; **DEPART** (present imperative) FROM ME, YOU WHO PRACTICE (present tense = habitually, as one's lifestyle, as the general "direction" of their life) LAWLESSNESS.'

## TWO HOUSES/FOUNDATIONS

**Matthew 7:24** (note) "Therefore everyone who hears these words (Sermon on the Mount - see notes Matthew 5:1ff) of Mine, and acts (present tense = as their lifestyle - the general "direction" of their life) upon them, may be compared to a wise man, who built his house upon the rock.

25 And the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and burst against that house; and yet it did not fall, for it had been founded upon the rock.

26 And everyone who hears these words of Mine, and does not act (present tense = the general "direction" of their life - your behavior does not save us but is a good indicator of whether one is genuinely saved, cp James 2:14 ; James 2:15-18; 2:19-2:26 - see notes on Js 2:14 ; 2:15; 2:16; 2:17; James 2:18; 2:19;2:20; 2:21; 2:22; 2:23; 2:24; 2:25; 2:26) upon them, will be like a foolish man, who built his house upon the sand.

27 And the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and burst against that house; and it fell, and great was its fall."

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**M R Vincent** writes that...

"The ungodly are **not** so." That "**not**" contains the germs of all moral disaster. We have set forth under this figure three aspects of the ungodly character.

**I. Its instability.** Take a life away from God, and you take from it unity of impulse. Passion, pride, selfishness, drive it hither and thither as the winds drive the dismantled ship. Nowhere but in God does man find a consistent law.

**II. Its worthlessness.** Chaff! The wind drives it away, and the husbandman is glad to have it driven away. An ungodly life is a worthless life, because, whatever it may be, however busy and bustling, it is not so. It is not used under God's direction and for God's uses.

**III. Its insecurity.** The contrast is between the tree, safe in its enclosure by the watercourses, watched and tended by the gardener, its fruits safe from the plunderer, and the chaff, loosely lying on the exposed threshing-floor, where the first blast can drive it no one cares whither. How safe is the man who abides in God, while he who puts himself outside of the restraints of Divine law forfeits likewise its protection. (M. R. Vincent, Gates into the Psalm Country, p. 21)

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**Psalm 1:5** [Therefore](#) the [wicked](#) will not [stand](#) in the [judgment](#), [nor sinners](#) in the [assembly](#) of the [righteous](#). ([NASB: Lockman](#))

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**English Translation of the Greek** (Septuagint): Therefore the ungodly shall not rise in judgment, nor sinners in the counsel of the just.

**Amplified:** Therefore the wicked [those disobedient and living without God] shall not stand [justified] in the judgment, nor sinners in the congregation of the righteous [those who are upright and in right standing with God]. ([Amplified Bible - Lockman](#))

**KJV:** Therefore the ungodly shall not stand in the judgment, nor sinners in the congregation of the righteous.

**NET:** For this reason the wicked cannot withstand judgment, nor can sinners join the assembly of the godly. ([NET Bible](#))

**NJB:** the wicked will not stand firm at the Judgement nor sinners in the gathering of the upright. ([NJB](#))

**Young's Literal:** Therefore the wicked rise not in judgment, Nor sinners in the company of the righteous,

## THEREFORE THE WICKED WILL NOT STAND IN THE JUDGMENT:

- Ps 5:5, 24:3, Lk 21:36, Jude 1:15

**Ps 5:5** The boastful shall not stand before Thine eyes; Thou dost hate all who do iniquity.

**Ps 9:7-8** But the LORD abides forever; He has established His throne for judgment, 8 And He will judge the world in righteousness; He will execute judgment for the peoples with equity.

**Ps 76:7** Thou, even Thou, art to be feared; And who may **stand** in Thy presence when once Thou art angry? (**Answer:** Only those hidden safely in Christ.)

**Na 1:6** Who can **stand** before His indignation? Who can endure the burning of His anger? His wrath is poured out like fire, And the rocks are broken up by Him.

**Mal 3:18** So you will again distinguish between the righteous and the wicked, between one who serves God and one who does not serve Him.

**Mt 13:49** "So it will be at the end of the age; the angels shall come forth, and take out the **wicked** from among the **righteous**,

**Therefore** - Develop the discipline of pausing to ponder key "connectives" (in this passage a term of conclusion) like therefore, asking your Teacher the Spirit to lead you into all the truth (cf 1 Cor 2:12-16; Ps 119:18). Here the psalmist amplifies what he has just stated about their being driven away by the wind. The wicked like chaff do not have the weight to resist God's "winds of judgment" and thus are blown away and unable to **stand in the judgment**.

Note that **will not stand in the judgment** does not mean they will be absent from judgment but that they will not be able to endure the judgment and will have no adequate defense. When they are brought before the judgment bar of God, they have no retort to God's just condemnation of their ungodliness.

**Ps 130:3** "If Thou, LORD, shouldst mark iniquities, O Lord, who could stand?"

**Guzik** - Because the ungodly have no "weight," they will be found lacking on the day of judgment. As it was said of King Belshazzar in the book of Daniel, ***You have been weighed in the balances, and found wanting*** (Daniel 5:27).

The wicked will **stand** before God at the **Great White Throne judgment** but they will not have a "leg to stand on" in terms of God's strict requirement for perfect righteousness (available only by grace through faith in Christ, our Righteousness!).

The **apostle John** records this sobering, sad event...

And I saw a **great white throne** and Him who sat upon it, from whose presence earth and heaven fled away, and no place was found for them. And I saw the dead, the great and the small, **standing** before the throne, and books were opened; and another book was opened, which is the book of life; and the dead were judged from the things which were written in the books, according to their deeds. And the sea gave up the dead which were in it, and death and Hades gave up the dead which were in them; and they were judged, every one of them according to their deeds. And death and Hades were thrown into the lake of fire. This is the second death, the lake of fire. And if anyone's name was not found written in the book of life, he was **thrown into the lake of fire**. (See **notes** [Revelation 20:11](#); [12](#); [13](#); [14](#); [15](#))

**Pritchard** - When the time for **judgment** comes, the **wicked will not stand** because they have no roots. Everything about them is blow and show, froth and worldly pomp, bluster and brag, and ego. But there is nothing of lasting value. With one breath, the Lord will

blow all the wicked into hell.

**Matthew Henry** writes that the **wicked "shall not stand in the judgment**, that is, they shall be found guilty, shall hang down the head with shame and confusion, and all their pleas and excuses will be overruled as frivolous. There is a judgment to come, in which every man's present character and work, though ever so artfully concealed and disguised, shall be truly and perfectly discovered, and appear in their own colours, and accordingly every man's future state will be, by an irreversible sentence, determined for eternity. The ungodly must appear in that judgment, to receive according to the things done in the body. They may hope to come off, nay, to come off with honour, but their hope will deceive them: They shall not stand in the judgment, so plain will the evidence be against them and so just and impartial will the judgment be upon it.

**Spurgeon** explains that the **wicked "shall stand** there to be judged, but not to be acquitted. Fear shall lay hold upon them there; they shall not **stand** their ground; they shall flee away; they shall not **stand** in their own defense; for they shall blush and be covered with eternal contempt."

And so while the wicked will not **stand** except to be judged by God, saved sinners will stand acquitted before God because the Judge (Christ - 2 Ti 4:1) was judged for them (in their place, as their sinless Substitute) at Calvary. Jude records

Now to Him who is able to keep you from stumbling, and **to make you stand in the presence of His glory blameless with great joy**, to the only God our Savior, through Jesus Christ our Lord, be glory, majesty, dominion and authority, before all time and now and forever. Amen. (Jude 24-25)

#### NOR SINNERS IN THE ASSEMBLY OF THE RIGHTEOUS:

- Ps 26:9; Mal 3:18; Mt 13:49; 25:32,41,46

The **writer of Hebrews** describes the **assembly of the righteous** writing that believers...

have come to Mount Zion and to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to myriads of angels, to the general assembly and church of the firstborn who are enrolled in heaven, and to God, the Judge of all, and to the spirits of the righteous made perfect, (Heb 12:22-23 - notes Hebrews 12:22; 23)

Instead as **Paul** explains **sinners** will

pay the penalty of eternal destruction away from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of his power (2 Thessalonians 1:9)

**Comment:** Here we see the double doom of all **sinners** - Condemned at the judgment-bar and separated from the Lord's very presence.

In the new creation **sinners** will be excluded from the **assembly of the righteous** as John explains noting that

for the cowardly and unbelieving and abominable and murderers and immoral persons and sorcerers and idolaters and all liars, their part will be in the lake that burns with fire and brimstone, which is the second death. (and) nothing unclean and no one who practices abomination and lying, shall ever come into it (the holy city, new Jerusalem), but only those whose names are written in the Lamb's book of life. (Rev 21:8, 27 - notes [Rev 21:8](#). and [Re 21:27](#))

**John Trapp** solemnly quipped that "The Irish air will sooner brook a toad, or a snake, than heaven a sinner."

**Pritchard** - the righteous will stand because they are like trees by the stream, with deep roots in the Word of God. The tree stands, the chaff disappears. That's why sinners won't be in the assembly of the righteous. They won't be there because the winds of judgment will already have removed them.

**Matthew Henry** writes that sinners will not be in the...

general assembly of the church of the first-born, a congregation of the righteous, of all the saints, and none but saints, and saints made perfect, such a congregation of them as never was in this world, 2Thes 2:1. The wicked shall not have a place in that congregation. Into the new Jerusalem none unclean nor unsanctified shall enter; they shall see the righteous enter into the kingdom, and themselves, to their everlasting vexation, thrust out, Luke 13:27.

The wicked and profane, in this world, ridiculed the righteous and their congregation, despised them, and

cared not for their company; justly therefore will they be for ever separated from them.

Hypocrites in this world, under the disguise of a plausible profession, may thrust themselves into the congregation of the righteous and remain undisturbed and undiscovered there; but Christ cannot be imposed upon, though his ministers may; the day is coming when He will separate between the sheep and the goats, the tares and the wheat.

**Spurgeon** explains this straightforward passage writing...

Well may the saints long for heaven, for no evil men shall dwell there, "nor sinners in the congregation of the righteous." All our congregations upon earth are mixed. Every Church hath one devil in it. The tares grow in the same furrows as the wheat. There is no floor which is as yet thoroughly purged from chaff. Sinners mix with saints, as dross mingles with gold. God's precious diamonds still lie in the same field with pebbles. Righteous Lots are this side heaven continually vexed by the men of Sodom.

Let us rejoice then, that in "the general assembly and church of the firstborn" (see Hebrews 12:23note) above, there shall by no means be admitted a single unrenewed soul. Sinners cannot live in heaven. They would be out of their element. Sooner could a fish live upon a tree than the wicked in Paradise. Heaven would be an intolerable hell to an impenitent man, even if he could be allowed to enter; but such a privilege shall never be granted to the man who perseveres in his iniquities. May God grant that we may have a name and a place in his courts above!

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**Fruit Or Chaff?** - Two well-known people—John Wesley and Mark Twain—vividly exemplify the contrast between the godly and ungodly as portrayed in Psalm 1. When Wesley, who had been joyous, energetic, and effective even in his 88th year, was dying, he suddenly sat up, looked at the people weeping at his bedside, and said, "Best of all, God is with us."

Mark Twain, morose and weary of life well before he died at 75, wrote, "A myriad of men are born; they labor and sweat and struggle for bread; they squabble and scold and fight; ... age creeps upon them; infirmities follow; ... those they love are taken from them, and the joy of life is turned to aching grief... [Release] comes at last—the only unpoisoned gift earth ever had for them—and they vanish from a world where they were of no consequence; ... a world which will lament them a day and forget them forever."

If we trust God and live for Him, we will—like Wesley—resemble stately trees that are fruitful through all time and eternity! We will experience joy and peace even in difficult times. If we reject God, though, our lives will resemble windblown chaff, forever empty and unsatisfying. The options are clear. It is either faith and everlasting joy, or unbelief and eternal regret. What will it be for you?— by Herbert Vander Lugt

Fill up each hour with what will last;  
Buy up the moments as they go;  
The life above, when this is past,  
Is the ripe fruit of life below.  
—Bonar

**He who puts God first will have joy that lasts.**

**Psalm 1:6** For the [LORD knows](#) the [way](#) of the [righteous](#), but the [way](#) of the [wicked](#) will [perish](#). ([NASB: Lockman](#))

**English Translation of the Greek** (Septuagint): For the Lord knows the way of the righteous; but the way of the ungodly shall perish.

**Amplified:** For the Lord knows and is fully acquainted with the way of the righteous, but the way of the ungodly [those living outside God's will] shall perish (end in ruin and come to nought). ([Amplified Bible - Lockman](#))

**KJV:** For the LORD knoweth the way of the righteous: but the way of the ungodly shall perish.

**NET:** Certainly the Lord guards the way of the godly, but the way of the wicked ends in destruction. ([NET Bible](#))

**NJB:** For Yahweh watches over the path of the upright, but the path of the wicked is doomed. ([NJB](#))

**Young's Literal:** For Jehovah is knowing the way of the righteous, And the way of the wicked is lost!

## FOR THE LORD KNOWS THE WAY OF THE RIGHTEOUS:

- Ps 37:18, 19, 20, 21, 22, 23,24; 139:1,2; 142:3; Job 23:10; Nah 1:7, Jn 10:14,27; 2Ti 2:19-note

### JEHOVAH INTIMATE WITH THE RIGHTEOUS

**For (term of explanation)** - Always seek to determine what the writer is explaining when you encounter a **"for"** (or **"because"**). In this context, the psalmist is helping us understand the distinction between the righteous and the wicked, elaborating on their respective destinies. In sum the writer he now gives the reason of this great difference between the righteous and the wicked, expressed in the foregoing verses.

**Knows (yada)** can mean simply to know, learn, perceive, discern, experience, to know people relationally, to make oneself known, to make to know. One of the main senses and the one that applies in the present passage is to know relationally and experientially. And so yada is also used for intimacy between a man and a woman as when Adam knew Eve his wife...

And Adam **knew** (yada'; LXX = ginosko) Eve his wife; and she conceived, and bare Cain, and said, I have gotten a man from the LORD. (Genesis 4:1, KJV)

**Yada** is translated by the Greek verb **ginosko** in the present tense which speaks of the Lord's continually (experientially) knowing the state of the righteous.

**Jehovah knew** Moses by name and face to face...

And the LORD said to Moses, "I will also do this thing of which you have spoken; for you have found favor in My sight, and I have **known** (yada') you by name." (Ex 33:17).

Since then no prophet has risen in Israel like Moses, whom the LORD **knew** (yada'; LXX = ginosko - knew by experience) face to face, (Deut 34:10).

**Jehovah** even knew **David's** sitting and arising...

O LORD, Thou hast searched me and **known** (yada'; LXX = ginosko - know) me. Thou dost **know** yada'; LXX = ginosko - know) when I sit down and when I rise up; Thou dost understand my thought from afar. (Ps 139:1-2)

In sum yada speaks of God knowing man intimately and in Hebrew is a participle which represents an action or condition in unbroken continuity. **Knows** then pictures God's continuing intimacy with, caring for and watching over His own.

As Jesus said in the gospel of John...

**Jn 10:14** "I am the good shepherd; and **I know** (ginosko - know) **My own**, and My own know Me... 27 My sheep hear My voice, and **I know** (ginosko - know) **them**, and they follow Me

**Paul** echoes the assurance that believers can have that the Lord God knows them and they are safe in Christ...

Nevertheless, the firm foundation of God stands, having this seal, **"The Lord knows those who are His,"** and, "Let everyone who names the name of the Lord abstain from wickedness." (see note 2 Timothy 2:19)

In **Psalm 37 David** presents a similar contrast between the fate of the godly and ungodly but that He knows the godly..

The LORD **knows** (Hebrew = yada; LXX = ginosko - knows by experience) the days of the blameless; and their inheritance will be forever. 19 They will not be ashamed in the time of evil; and in the days of famine they will have abundance. 20 But the wicked will perish; and the enemies of the LORD will be like the glory of the pastures, they vanish—like smoke they vanish away. (Psalm 37:18-20)

The prophet **Nahum** (in the context of a description of the Judgment of God on the earth says)

The LORD is good, a stronghold in the day of trouble, and He **knows** those who take refuge (chacah = flee for protection; confide or hope in; put their trust) in Him. (Nahum 1:7)

**Job** suffered incredible trials and afflictions and in Job 23 even cried out...

Oh that I knew where I might find Him, that I might come to His seat! (Job 23:3)

Nevertheless Job persevered because he understood the truth in Psalm 1:6 affirming that even though he could not see God, he knew God could see Him declaring...

He **knows** the way I take; When He has tried me, I shall come forth as gold. (see note **Job 23:10**)

**Spurgeon** elaborates on the phrase "**He knows...**" writing that in the original Hebrew it reads more fully...

"The Lord **is knowing** the way of the righteous." (In other words) He is constantly looking on their way, and though it may be often in mist and darkness, yet the Lord knows it. If it be in the clouds and tempest of affliction, He understands it. He numbers the hairs of our head. He will not suffer any evil to befall us. He knows the way that I take: when He hath tried me, I shall come forth as gold." (Job 23:10)

**Comment:** The Septuagint (LXX) likewise speaks of God's continually knowing, translating the Hebrew verb **yada** with the Greek verb **ginosko** in the **present tense** which signifies that God is continually knowing experientially. He is aware of what is going on in the life of every one of His children. **Ginosko** conveys the basic meaning of taking in knowledge in regard to something or someone, but it is knowledge that goes beyond the mere factual. By extension, **ginosko** frequently was used of a special relationship between the person who knows (in this case God) and the object of the knowledge (the righteous). It was often used of the intimate relationship between husband and wife and between God and His people.

**The way of the righteous** - **The way** refers to their entire life, and they had entered into this life journey through Jesus, **the Way**. Jesus said to His disciples...

I am **the way**, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me (Jn 14:6)

**Guzik** comments that...

At least four times in the Book of Acts Christianity is called **the Way**. Certainly, it is the way of the righteous, not the way of the ungodly. Which way are you on?

**How did they become righteous in the Old Testament? Was it by keeping the law? Was it by carrying out the prescribed sacrifices?** No, neither of these ways leads to the kingdom of heaven. The OT saints entered this way in the same manner NT now enter, by grace through faith. Those who have believed in the promised Messiah or the Messiah Who has come, died, was buried and has resurrected and ascended to the right hand of the Father.

**Abraham** is the prototype of an OT saint who was righteous

**Genesis 15:6** Then he **believed** in the LORD; and He reckoned it to him as **righteousness**.

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**Deep Roots** - Some friends of mine planted two trees of the same kind and age. The first was set in level ground in the middle of the yard, where its roots went deep into the ground to soak up water. The second was planted at the bottom of a steep bank. When it rained, the water rushed past it to the street.

Both trees appeared to thrive. Then a strong windstorm came. The tree in the middle of the lawn stood firm, while the other one toppled over. Why? The root systems were different. The tree in the lawn had deep roots, while the other one had shallow roots. At the base of the bank, the water always passed swiftly over the top of the soil, so those roots stayed shallow. That tree, therefore, could not withstand the force of the wind.

We need to let our roots grow deep, anchoring us firmly in the Word of God. We must not settle for the rushing surface waters of emotion and experience. They have their place in the Christian life, but we need to take the time to learn the deeper, strengthening truths of the Bible and the deeper realities of the Spirit (1 Cor. 2:9-13). Then, when the pressures of life increase or the strong winds of temptation blow, we won't be toppled. Our deep roots will enable us to withstand adversity.— by David C. Egner ([Our Daily Bread](#), Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. — Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved)

Standing on the promises that cannot fail,  
When the howling storms of doubt and fear assail,  
By the living Word of God I shall prevail,  
Standing on the promises of God.  
—Carter

When you're rooted in truth,

you can withstand the winds of trial.

**Deep Roots** - In my orchard are two pear trees. Last summer was extremely dry, yet one of the trees was unaffected and remained green and yielded luscious pears. The other tree did not do so well. Its leaves turned yellow, the fruit shriveled, and the leaves and the fruit both dropped to the ground. The tree seemed to be dead.

Then came the rains, and the ground was soaked with moisture. The tree that seemed to be dead sprang to life again. Soon it was covered with leaves, and (believe it or not) in the latter part of August it burst into full bloom. Little pears came into view, but then came the frost and no fruit matured.

One tree thrived and produced delicious fruit in season. What made the difference? Its roots had grown deep, where they found plenty of water. The other had shallow roots and depended on the uncertain rains. The one was like the tree David described, "planted by the rivers of water" (Ps. 1:3). The other, with belated bloom, bore no fruit.

Which kind of a tree are you? Do your roots go deep into the underground streams of the Word of God, or is your devotional life shallow and only occasional? Dig deep, friend, deep into the Book, and your life will produce abundant spiritual fruit.— by M.R. De Haan ([Our Daily Bread, Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. — Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved](#))

The just are nourished like a tree  
Set by the riverside;  
Their leaf is green, their fruit is sure,  
And thus their works abide.  
—Anon.

We cannot bear fruit  
without the water of God's Word.

#### BUT THE WAY OF THE WICKED WILL PERISH:

- The way -- Ps 112:10; 146:9; Pr 14:12; 15:9; Mt 7:13-note; 2Pe 2:12-note

### ONE OF GOD'S LEAST FAVORITE PROMISES!

Many try to deny the reality of eternal punishment using a variety of humanistic arguments. The fact is that the Bible clearly teaches the certainty of eternal hell for all who refuse to believe on the Lord Jesus Christ. God is holy and He cannot let unholy people into a holy Heaven and the only way to become holy is by being clothed with the holy righteousness of Christ which sinners are given by grace through faith in His Name. You can deny eternal punishment in life, but you will spend eternity acknowledging the reality of Hell if you reject God's Son. Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and you will be saved and enjoy true life now in time and glorified life throughout eternity. This is no fable, but fact.

**But the way (term of contrast)** - The dramatic contrast and finale of those who have shunned, sinned against, scorned and scoffed at God. Not just occasionally, but continually. This was their lifestyle.

**Solomon** writes of the self-deception of the way of the wicked...

There is **a way** which seems right to a man, but its end is **the way** of death. (Pr 14:12)

**Jesus** gives a command to enter the only way which will not perish...

**Enter** (The **aoist imperative** = command calling for urgent, immediate and effective action!) by the narrow gate; for the gate is wide, and **the way** is broad that leads to destruction, and **many** are those who enter by it. (see **note** Matthew 7:13)

**The way of the wicked** and all they have ever accomplished (the sum total of their life) is like an apple that falls off the apple tree and lies on the ground in rot and decay thus losing any chance of ever fulfilling its full potential as an apple. **The way** of the wicked is a state of total disintegration or collapse.

**Perish** (06) (**abad**, cp Abaddon 011) is a verb meaning to perish, to be destroyed, to be ruined, to be lost, to be in a state of ruin and destruction pertaining to an object, including the death (Ex 10:7). Abad can mean literally to die, or, in the case of things, reputation,

etc., to pass away. In a causative sense, **abad** means to destroy, to reduce to some degree of disorder. God's destruction of evil, both threatened (Lev. 26:38) and realized (Nu 17:12); Israel's destruction of the Canaanites and their altars (Nu 33:52; Dt. 12:2, 3); the perishing of natural life (Ps. 49:10; 102:26; Eccl. 7:15); the perishing of abstract qualities such as wisdom and hope (Isa. 29:14; Lam. 3:18); and an item or animal being lost (Dt. 22:3; Eccl. 3:6)

**Stephen Renn - Abad** - It is first of all predicated of God's people under divine judgment for rebellion against him, under the covenant curse. In particular, **abad** constitutes the inevitable fate of the Israelite people, who will perish in the process of being sent into exile (cf. Lev. 26:38; Dt 4:26; 8:20; 30:18; Jos. 23:13; Jer. 4: 9; 27:10; Eze. 25: 7). The people will also perish on account of their idolatry (cf. Dt 8:19; Jos. 23:16). Individuals or groups of people are also said to "perish" at the hand of God - Korah (Nu. 16:33); Ahab's dynasty (2Ki 9: 8, cp Ps 2:12; Jer. 6:21; Mic. 4: 9; Jon. 3: 9. Nu 17: 2 expresses the fear of perishing. The enemies of Yahweh are said to perish as a consequence of judgment pronounced on them (cf. Nu 21:30; Jdg 5:31; Ps 9: 3, 6; 37:20; Isa. 41:11; Jer. 51:18 [Babylon]; Amos 1: 8 [Philistia]). General references to people dying or perishing are found in Job 4: 7; Ps 49:10; Pr 31: 6; Jon. 1: 6. Such a fate includes the wicked (cf. Ps 1: 6; 37:20; 83:17; Pr 28:28; Jer. 48: 8); as well as the righteous (cf. Eccl 7:15; Isa. 57: 1; Mic. 7: 2). Job 4:11 refers to animals perishing. In Esther 4:16 "**If I perish, I perish**" **Abad** also refers to that which is "ruined." = the land of Israel (Jer 9:12 cf. Joel 1:11; Amos 3:15; Jonah 4:10). **Abad** is used metaphorically -- Job utters a curse in Job 3:3, where he expresses a desire to have the day of his birth "perish." "Perish" can express the sense of "disappear" = wisdom of the wise (Isa. 29:14; Jer. 49: 7), law of God (Jer. 18: 8; Ezek 7:26); truth (Jer. 7:26).

**James Swanson** summarizes **abad** - **1. (piel)** destroy, annihilate, exterminate, wipe out, i.e., cause to destroy an object (Nu 33:52); (hif) destroy (Dt 7:10); **2. (qal)** not exist, i.e., have a state no longer existing (Ezek 19:5); **3. (qal)** be lost, i.e., be in a state of wandering, in which the whereabouts of an object is unknown, so in a state lacking knowledge about an object (1Sa 19:3); **4. (qal)** wandering, act. as a nomad, i.e., to go from place to place with no particular plan, as a lifestyle of some groups of people (Dt 26:5); **5. (piel)** squander, waste, i.e., showing a total lack of value for the object wasted (Pr 29:3); **6. (piel)** expel, i.e., to drive one by force from an area (Eze 28:16); **7. (qal)** lose courage, formally, ruin of heart, i.e., be in a state of hopelessness, lacking confidence in a future situation (Jer 4:9); **8. (qal)** internal corruption, formally, ruin the heart, i.e., engage in a behavior which is a moral deviation from what is right (Eccl 7:7)

**NAS Usage:** annihilate(2), annihilated(1), been lost(1), broken(1), corrupts(1), **destroy**(33), destroyed(15), destroying(2), destroys(2), destruction(2), dying(2), fail(1), fails(1), give up as lost(1), lacking(1), **lost**(12), make vanish(1), makes to perish(1), no(2), obliterate(1), **perish**(61), perished(16), perishes(7), perishing(2), **ruined**(4), surely perish(3), take(1), utterly destroy(1), wandering(1), wastes(1), wiped(1).

**Abad** - 175v -

Ex 10:7; Lev 23:30; 26:38; Num 16:33; 17:12; 21:29f; 24:19; 33:52; Dt 4:26; 7:10, 20, 24; 8:19f; 9:3; 11:4, 17; 12:2f; 22:3; 26:5; 28:20, 22, 51, 63; 30:18; 32:28; Josh 7:7; 23:13, 16; Jdg 5:31; 1Sa 9:3, 20; 2 Sam 1:27; 2Kgs 9:8; 10:19; 11:1; 13:7; 19:18; 21:3; 24:2; 2Chr 22:10; Esther 3:9, 13; 4:7, 14, 16; 7:4; 8:5, 11; 9:6, 12, 24; Job 3:3; 4:7, 9, 11, 20; 6:18; 8:13; 11:20; 12:23; 14:19; 18:17; 20:7; 29:13; 30:2; 31:19; Ps 1:6; 2:12; 5:6; 9:3, 5f, 18; 10:16; 21:10; 31:12; 37:20; 41:5; 49:10; 68:2; 73:27; 80:16; 83:17; 92:9; 102:26; 112:10; 119:92, 95, 176; 142:4; 143:12; 146:4; Pr 1:32; 10:28; 11:7, 10; 19:9; 21:28; 28:28; 29:3; 31:6; Eccl 3:6; 5:14; 7:7, 15; 9:6, 18; Isa 26:14; 27:13; 29:14; 37:19; 41:11; 57:1; 60:12; Jer 1:10; 4:9; 6:21; 7:28; 9:12; 10:15; 12:17; 15:7; 18:7, 18; 23:1; 25:10, 35; 27:10, 15; 31:28; 40:15; 46:8; 48:8, 36, 46; 49:7, 38; 50:6; 51:18, 55; Lam 2:9; 3:18; Ezek 6:3; 7:26; 12:22; 19:5; 22:27; 25:7, 16; 26:17; 28:16; 30:13; 32:13; 34:4, 16; 37:11; Joel 1:11; Amos 1:8; 2:14; 3:15; Obad 1:8, 12; Jonah 1:6, 14; 3:9; 4:10; Mic 4:9; 5:10; 7:2; Zeph 2:5, 13; Zech 9:5

The **Septuagint (LXX)** translates **abad** in Psalm 1:6 with the Greek verb **apollumi** (see notes) which speaks of destruction but **not** annihilation. **Apollumi** basically has to do with that which is ruined and is no longer usable for its intended purpose. All men and women are created in the image of God and have the potential to bring glory to God, but this is only possible if one is born again ("re-created" as it were in Christ). Only the redeemed can properly bring glory to their Creator. Isaiah speaks of this privilege believers have to bring glory to God writing that...

Everyone who is called by My name, and whom I have created for My glory, whom I have formed, even whom I have made." (Isaiah 43:7)

All men are born in sin in Adam and if they fail to be born again by grace through faith they remain dead in their trespasses and sins and when they die, they soul and their **way** (everything that they have every done while alive) will perish forever.

**Apollumi** is the verb Jesus used to describe those who are thrown into hell (Mt 10:28). As He makes clear elsewhere, hell is not a place or state of nothingness or unconscious existence, as is the Hindu Nirvana. It is the place of everlasting torment, the place of eternal death, where there will be "weeping and gnashing of teeth" (see Mt 13:42, 50). All people are created by God for His glory, but when they refuse to come to Him for salvation they lose their opportunity for redemption and for becoming what God intends for

them to be. They are then fit only for condemnation and eternal destruction. This truth should motivate every believer to seek to present the gospel with their life and then their lips to all around them who are still dead in their trespasses and sins.

To reiterate, destruction for an unsaved sinner does not result in annihilation or extinction. When their life ends on earth, it is not followed by the loss of being, but of well-being. The Gospel promises everlasting life for all who believe in Christ's death, burial and resurrection. Dear reader if you are not saved listen to the Savior's own words...

I said therefore to you, that you shall die in your sins; for **unless** you believe that **I am** (I am = a title for God), you shall die in your sins. (John 8:24)

**Steven Cole** writes that...

the plain teaching of God's Word, which says,

"It is appointed for men to die once and after this comes judgment" (see note Hebrews 9:27).

We all must stand before God. If you take God and eternity out of the picture, all you are is an accident--the chance product of random chance. Your birth was an accident, your death will be an accident. All you are is an accident suspended between two accidents! There's no happiness in that view.

The Word of God declares that **you are not an accident**. You are here as the creation of God, made in His image, designed to find true happiness in Him and in His Word. But due to your rebellion, as seen in your running your own life rather than in submitting to Christ as Lord, you are alienated from God. He could rightfully judge you, but because of His love and mercy, He sent Jesus Christ to die in your place on the cross. You must turn from your rebellion, trust in Him and accept the pardon He offers. If you will do that and then build your life on God and His Word, you will live happily ever after, both now and throughout eternity! And that's no fairy tale! ([Psalm 1 How To Live Happily Ever After](#))

**Spurgeon** emphasizes that the psalmist is saying that...

Not only shall they **perish** themselves, but their **way** shall **perish** too. The righteous carves his name upon the Rock, but the wicked writes his remembrance in the sand (see Jesus' words in Matthew 7:24; 25; 26; 27-- see notes - Mt 7:24; 25; 26; 27). The righteous man ploughs the furrows of earth, and sows a harvest here, which shall never be fully reaped till he enters the enjoyments of eternity (see Mt 6:19-note; Mt 6:20-note); but as for the wicked, he ploughs the sea, and though there may seem to be a shining trail behind his keel, yet the waves shall pass over it, and the place that knew him shall know him no more for ever.

**The very "way" of the ungodly shall perish.** If it exist in remembrance, it shall be in the remembrance of the bad; for the Lord will cause the name of the wicked to rot, to become a stench in the nostrils of the good, and to be only known to the wicked themselves by its putridity.

**May the Lord cleanse our hearts and our ways, that we may escape the doom of the ungodly, and enjoy the blessedness of the righteous!**

In short, while God **knows the way of the righteous**, in stark contrast He does not **know** the way of the wicked as Jesus warns at the conclusion of His Sermon on the Mount...

Not everyone who says to Me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the **kingdom of heaven**; but he who **does** (present tense = not perfectly but as their general lifestyle) the will of My Father Who is in heaven. "Many will say to Me on that day, 'Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in Your name, and in Your name cast out demons, and in Your name perform many miracles?' "And then I will declare to them, '**I never** (absolutely never) **knew** (ginosko - the very verb the Lxx uses of God knowing the way of the righteous!) **you**; **DEPART** (present imperative - command to move away from with emphasis upon separation) from me, you who practice (present tense = habitually, as one's lifestyle, as the general "direction" of their life) lawlessness.' (See notes Matthew 7:21 ; 22; 23)

As to their doom, they shall be forgotten in the annals of eternity in the ages to come, leaving no trace, taking no root and forever excluded from the other world.

**Ray Pritchard** offers a practical, pithy summation of Psalm 1...

Let's wrap up this study of Psalm 1 with four conclusions that bring the truth home to the 21st-century.

#### **1) Casual flirtation with sinners soon leads to total domination by evildoers.**

We cannot escape the reality of this truth. If you run with the pigs, you're going to smell like the pigs. And

pretty soon, you'll look and act and dress like the pigs. When that happens, don't be surprised if others mistake you for a pig. What seems small to you today may lead to total domination by sin tomorrow. Be warned. Be alert. Don't play with fire if you don't want to get burned.

**2) As long as the world is what it is, godliness must largely be negative.**

At the very least, godliness in a sinful world will always involve separation from evil. How that works out in your personal life is an issue between you and the Lord. I cannot make rules that will fit every situation but we dare not ignore the overall principle. Godliness involves much more than staying away from evil influences, but it is not less than that. If we ignore the negative, we'll never get to the positive.

**3) Many people who seem successful by worldly standards will be judged total failures by God.**

Some of us will live in the shadow of these "successful" people for many years, and we may be compared with them in an unfavorable way. There isn't much we can do about that except to remind ourselves that the only evaluation that counts is God's. If we are faithful to him, everything will come out alright in the end.

**4) The happiest people in the world are those whose lives are built on the Word of God.**

I think we can state that in a more forceful manner. The only truly happy people in the world are those who follow the prescription of Psalm 1. Others may be happy in a temporary or worldly sense, but they do not know the joy and deep satisfaction that comes from living with God's approval. That is reserved for the true children of God.

**In light of this psalm, what does the church need?** The answer is clear. The church needs the Bible.

**What should pastors be preaching?** Pastors should preach the Bible.

**And what should elders be teaching?** They should teach the Bible.

**What should church members be studying?** Let them study the Bible.

When we are doing what God has commanded, every church will truly be a "Bible church" and every Christian will be a "Bible Christian."

This is what we need, this is what we must have, this is the basis for all that we do and all that we say. Apart from God's Word, we have nothing to offer to a hurting world. There is a blessing waiting for those who build their lives upon this ancient book. May that blessing be ours so that we, having been blessed, may be a blessing to others in the year to come. ([Psalm 1 Meditate on the Word of the Lord Day and Night](#))