

Psalm 1

In his well-known poem *The Road Less Taken* Robert Frost expresses a dilemma we all face as we look back over the course of our life: at critical, life-changing junctures, did we make the right choices? Only God knows. We die wondering.



Like Frost, the psalmist depicts life as a choice between two ways, but there the similarities end. Unlike Frost, the psalmist does not leave us wondering. The two paths are very different, both in the way they are walked and in where they lead. More than that, the psalmist does not have in view individual forks (i.e. decision-points) along the path of life, but the great path of life itself. Whose path will we tread: God's path, or that of rebellious mankind?

First, the way of the righteous. They are firmly rooted in God's word. They read and meditate upon it, they delight in it. They do not question God's word but draw life from it, just as trees draw their life from fertile, well-watered soil. The fruit the righteous bear has nothing to do with material blessings and worldly successes; rather, it is the evidence of a life that pleases God. It is the same spiritual fruit which Jesus spoke of in John 15.8. Jesus' teaching in the Sermon on the Mount (Matt 7.13-27) draws on similar imagery.

The righteous are defined not only by what they do but also by what they don't do. They do not walk two paths. They do not walk with the wicked. This is not to say that they cut themselves off from the wicked, having nothing to do with them, but they do not adopt any of their rebellious thinking, attitudes or ways (see 1 Cor 5.9ff.)

The wicked, in contrast, have rejected God's teaching. They *walk* according to their own counsel, *sit* in judgment over God's word (scoffing at it), and take their *stand* in the way of sinners, i.e. do evil deeds. As a result, their lives – no matter how apparently successful – amount to nothing. They are like chaff. At the end of their lives, "in the judgment", the wicked will not stand but fall. They will perish.

The contrast between these two ways could not be more stark. They have nothing in common, hence the righteous have no place in the counsel of the wicked, nor sinners in the congregation of the righteous. One thing's certain: those who choose God's way will not die wondering or with regrets. They are, from the beginning of their walk unto eternity, blessed.

To ponder

How careful are you about what you read, and who you let influence you?

To pray

Almighty Father, I praise you for the blessings that come from reading your word, walking in your Spirit, and belonging to your Church. Grant that I may always follow in the footsteps of my Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, that I might bear much fruit. In his name I pray. Amen.