

*The Psalms begin with an invitation to the happy and prosperous life by taking the LORD’s path, delighting in his instruction and pursuing his righteousness. Take any other path and it will inevitably end in judgment and ruin. Ultimately there are only two paths in life: Blessing & Curse. Which will you take?*

**Introduction** – In seventh grade I memorized Robert Frost’s poem “The Road Not Taken”.

**Background** – Psalms 1 and 2 function as twin pillars into this literary “temple” of the LORD. God’s Word and God’s Reign. How you respond to each of these pillars of worship will determine whether you will experience God’s blessing or curse, in this life and into eternity.

## **I. The Blessed Path**

### **A. Veer away from ungodly influencers (v. 1)**

Notice the righteous man is described by what he avoids. He stands out and away from the worldly crowd. Not to avoid all association with unbelievers, but to avoid the path of ungodly people who can have an influence on you. You must avoid dabbling in their way of life, and guard your heart so you won’t be enticed even one bit by the fun and prosperity they seem to have. Keep in mind these wicked, sinners, scoffers are all kinds of ungodly people even within Israel who refuse to live by the covenant. A lonely person trying to do what is right is dangerously susceptible to falling in with the wrong crowd because human beings naturally group together and naturally fall together.

### **B. Delight and meditate on the LORD’s *torah* (v. 2)**

The righteous man delights in the law (the *torah*) of the LORD (Psalm 119:77, 92, 97, 113). The blessed man loves God’s *torah* (instructions). Psalm 1 is written to present the Psalter as God’s “A to Z” instructions (first word begins with *Aleph*; last word begins with *Tav*) for walking on the blessed path, particularly amid adversity and temptation from ungodly influencers. If you delight in the LORD’s *torah*, then what will you naturally do? You will meditate on it. Meditation was thinking through the mouth (Psalm 19:14). According to the Bible, meditating on *torah* is the secret to achieving anything worthwhile in life. Facing any and every activity, whether day or night, with a view to please God by knowing and obeying his Word, is the ideal (Psalms 32:4; 42:3; 55:10; Isaiah 60:11).

### **C. Agricultural image: a tree (v. 3)**

He who is blessed is like a struggling fruit tree in a dry climate that is transplanted by streams of clear flowing water. As the tree drinks of the water in the streams, the righteous man drinks from the *torah*, the LORD’s instruction. Fruit on the tree is an extension of the metaphor that refers to the spiritual life (Proverbs 12:12; John 15:5; Colossians 1:10). In all the righteous man does, he prospers. The more we delight in God’s Word and spend time meditating on that Word in his presence, the more we will prosper. The Hebrew word for “prosper” means success (Isaiah 55:11). Not in terms of guaranteed of health, wealth, and happiness. When we apply God’s wisdom, the “fruit” we bear will be good. Even if you don’t check all the success boxes on your prosperity resume, nevertheless you receive God’s approval (Matthew 6:33). You must delight in God’s Word and meditate on it as your pathway to knowing God. Only then will the *torah* of the LORD be your guide and nourishment.

## **II. The Cursed Path**

Psalm 1 instruction about the cursed path describes a downward moral progression in the movement from lesser to greater sin commitments. From *walking* (accepting the world’s advice), to *standing* (being party to the world’s ways), to *sitting* (adopting the most fatal attitude: scoffing).

#### **A. Sincerely give wicked advice (v. 1a)**

*Walking* in the counsel of the *wicked* (those who refuse to acknowledge God, who are loose or lax in their ways) imagines a person hanging out with wicked people and listening to their advice.

#### **B. Proudly stand up for sinful principles (v. 1b)**

*Standing* in the way of *sinners* (those who miss the mark of God's law; Judges 20:16) implies the man who was at first walking with the wicked has progressed to now standing firm on the cursed path. At this marker he stands up for his new convictions: supporting, practicing, and defending sin as a way of life because he stands together with other sinners.

#### **C. Cynically play the anti-Christian scoffer (v. 1c)**

*Sitting* in the seat of *scoffers* (those who treat God with contempt and have settled into a dismissive attitude) is an image of a man who is settled and thus actively hostile to those opposed to his evil lifestyle. He feels liberated from God's righteous law, but in reality he is in bondage to depravity (Psalm 26:3-7; Deuteronomy 6:7). Scoffers go out of their way to mock righteous people who trust in God because they mock God himself (Psalms 86:14; 119:51,69,78,85,122; Proverbs 1:22; 3:34; 9:7-8). In doing so they lead and seduce others into the downward spiral of walking in their wicked counsel.

#### **D. Agricultural image: chaff (v. 4)**

The wicked are like chaff. Chaff is the husks and straw removed from wheat in the acts of threshing and winnowing. Farmers separate wheat from chaff by tossing threshed wheat into the open air for the wind to breeze through it. The lightest puff of air can blow chaff away because it lacks substance. Chaff is rootless, weightless, and useless. It pictures those who reject God's covenant: unstable, worthless, and easily blown away (Isaiah 17:13; 40:23-24; Jeremiah 13:24; Hosea 13:3; Zephaniah 2:2; Matthew 3:12). They are aimless, directionless, and ultimately unsuccessful without a love for God and his Word.

### **III. The Chosen Path**

#### **A. The sinner's dilemma (vv. 5, 6b)**

God's Word warns in many places that when the wicked attempt to stand up to the Judge in their own strength and on their own principles, they won't have a leg to stand on. Even if you choose a path of being as good as you can be, of being religious or spiritual or whatever you hope will please God with your righteousness, then your hidden and hypocritical sins will reveal you're still on the cursed path! The sinner's dilemma is a three-fold problem: we are all born with an evil heart, a filthy past, and a destructive life (Ezekiel 36:25-27). And we can't *do* anything for ourselves or to ourselves to escape.

#### **B. Believe in the Blessed Man (v. 6a; cf. vv. 1-3; Psalm 2)**

So is there any way out of the sinner's dilemma? Listen to the answer of Jesus ([John 6:28-29](#)). He's forcing you to take a long look at Psalm 1. Verse 6 says, "The LORD knows the way (path) of the righteous." God knows there is only one blessed man. And God says if you want to be like that blessed man, then he commands you must repent of your sins and your unacceptable self-righteousness, and believe into that blessed man who is Jesus Christ, the crucified and risen Savior of sinners. Only with a heart devoted to the Lord's Word will you be able to walk the blessed path and be counted among the righteous—those whom the LORD knows with saving love and devotion.

**Conclusion** – Jesus Christ speaks of the blessed path in [Matthew 7:13-14](#). True words indeed spoken by the one who is that blessed gate! But what about that poem I memorized in seventh grade? Viewed through the lens of Scripture, there is truth for you and me in "The Road Not Taken".