

Whose Counsel will be Followed

Psalm 1

Pastor Russ Kennedy

<This is an outline, a sketch of the text for preaching>

When you need counsel, where do you go? Who do you go to talk to?

What results do you expect? How do you know if you have received godly counsel ?

These are important questions. But even more important is asking about the influences in your life. Who shapes your thinking, your expectations? What do you believe and why? What casual or even intentional talk, reading, listening forms the way you think? How much does social media fill your mind, your thoughts, your desires?

As a church we also have to be acutely aware of whose counsel is affecting, directing, shaping who we are and what we do.

I want to approach this Psalm and listen to it at these two levels, not because they are separate, but because they are deeply intertwined.

Our Character Described (v.1-2)

Our Psalm celebrates those who are blessed. The idea here is of spiritual favor...

¹ Blessed is the man
who walks not in the counsel of the wicked,
nor stands in the way of sinners,
nor sits in the seat of scoffers;
² but his delight is in the law of the Lord,
and on his law he meditates day and night.

In What is Avoided (v.1)

The counsel of the wicked...

Life and ministry are not ordered, shaped, directed by the words of unbelievers.

Our godly way of living and advice is sought...

The way of sinners...

Life and ministry are not directed into the way, the characteristics, the trajectory of unbelievers.

Our intentional path and the direction that is taken...

The seat of scoffers...

Life and ministry are not comfortable with derisive attitudes and words...

Our wise relationships and the attitudes we cultivate...

Three important progressions:

Walk	stand	sit
Counsel	path	seat
Wicked	sinners	scoffers

There is a similar progression in Joshua and Ephesians: Sit, stand, walk...

In What is Affirmed (v.2)

The attitude that is cultivated.

We *delight* in the Word of God...

The action that does the cultivating.

We *meditate* on the Word of God...

The natural conclusion then is why would the advice, the principles, the counsel, of the wicked be of any real interest to us in our lives or ministry? Yet so many churches do just that. In spite of the whole Bible warning us against the wisdom of the world,

This is what we have affirmed and what we continue to aim for.

Blessed are the people
who do not live by the counsel of the wicked,
who do not stand in the path that sinners make or travel,
who do not sit in the seat of those who mock God.
Blessed are the people
who delight in the Word of the Lord,
and who meditate, think, reflect on His Word day and night.

May God grant His grace to make us this kind of people...

Our Comparison Drawn (v. 3-4)

Repeatedly the Scriptures use this comparison.

³ He is like a tree planted by streams of water
that yields its fruit in its season,
and its leaf does not wither.
In all that he does, he prospers.

⁴ The wicked are not so,
but are like chaff that the wind drives away.

What the Blessed are Like (v.3)

Where we are planted.

We will become a tree with roots deep into living water...

What we produce.

Our lives are green all the year and produce the right fruit at the right time...

How we prosper

What we do has a good, lasting, and glorious effect...

What the Wicked are Like (v.4)

The wicked are a deep contrast. Unlike the blessed, the wicked are chaff blown away by the winds of trial, trouble, and judgment...

Our Conclusion Deduced (v.5-6)

⁵ Therefore the wicked will not stand in the judgment,
nor sinners in the congregation of the righteous;

⁶ for the Lord knows the way of the righteous,
but the way of the wicked will perish.

What we Observe in the World

The plight of the wicked in the future – they cannot stand in the judgment...

The plight of sinners in the present – they cannot stand in the congregation...

Why It is True

God is intimately involved with the saints...

God will ultimately deal with the sinners...

Reflect and Respond

Who is this blessed man? First and foremost, it is the Lord Jesus Christ. He is pinnacle of the blessed man. Without Him, there are no blessed people, only wicked people. He is all that this is described as being.

We must be so careful. We are so graphically warned of the progressive and corrosive nature of sin.

The ungodly have their counsel, the sinner their way of sinning, and the scorner his comfortable chair of mockery. We are cautioned about their counsel, warned of their way, prevented from their path, and suspicious of their seat.

The basic contrast between the counsel of the godly and the ungodly is between what it produces. But what it produces is not evaluated in human terms. It is evaluated before the eyes of God.

We are not seeking man's approval. It will soon come that we who live by the word, prosper by the word, may die by the sword; and that at the hands of brethren. Yet we will seek only His approval; that "Well done" from His gracious lips.

"The Lord reckons the times which pass over us ... Let us therefore, improve upon them. Now we are afflicted, it is a season of prayer; now we are enlarged, it is a season of praise; I am now at a sermon, I will hear what God will say; now in the company of the learned and wise, I will draw on some knowledge and counsel from him; I am under temptation, now is a fit time to lean on the Name of the Lord; I am in a place of dignity and power, let me consider what is required of me of the Lord in such a time as this. And thus, as the tree brings forth her fruit in her season, so a wise Christian, as a wise husbandman, hath his distinct employments... , bringing forth his fruit in his season." John Spencer 1658

Behold the wicked, his counsel, his way, his seat. It is chaff; light, husk, profitless, unstable, blown withered away in the wind. Behold the godly, a planted, cultivated tree, green in leaf and full in blossom and fruit, the roots of his life deeply implanted in the Water of Life and the Word of God, hearing that "well done".

This is that blessed man. May he multiply in our midst. This is the blessed church. May we continue to grow in this grace.