

New Blooms [Psalms]

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1. Here at the beginning of the year, people are thinking about many things.
 - a. Maybe it's resolutions. Maybe it's health & fitness. Maybe it's your taxes!
 - b. I'm not sure many are thinking of yard work.
 - c. This unseasonably warm weather has me thinking about my ravaged yard.
 - 1) I've had relentless squirrel attacks in the last year.
 - 2) Even though it's a small urban yard, I want it to look good.
2. I'm not much of a horticulturalist or lawn expert.
 - a. Even though I'm a city guide, I'm fascinated by cultivation: making things grow.
 - b. Biblically, we see this at work in Genesis with the assignment given to Adam and Eve.
 - c. For them, yard work wasn't enough.
3. As we start a new year, I hope you're interested in cultivating your spiritual life.
 - a. This year, we're starting a new study of the book of Psalms.
 - b. Although many of us have read through the Psalms, few have devoted intense study.
 - c. Our goal is through the songs of the ancients that we see God in a new light.
 - d. As we open up the Scriptures to start the year, we start with **Psalm 1**

Verse 1

¹ Blessed is the one
who does not walk in step with the wicked
or stand in the way that sinners take
or sit in the company of mockers,

1. It starts poetically: the Hebrew is "*ashray ha'ish asher*"
 - a. This psalm, though first, is likely a later psalm, is a summarization of the entire book.
 - b. It speaks of blessings, but talks of avoidance.
 - c. How are blessings acquired
2. By not **Walking, Standing, or Sitting**.
 - a. Ancient Jewish commentaries speak of the elementary nature of these verbs.
 - 1) In fact, it's the inverse of the standard pattern/development of humanity.
 - 2) A baby learns first to sit, then to stand, then to walk.
 - 3) But here we have wayward adults regressing.
 - b. We go to get wisdom from the Price of Darkness, Ozzy Osbourne
"It's just a sign of the times: going forward in reverse."
 - c. How do you receive blessings: by not courting evil.
 - 1) Wicked/Sinners/Mockers are those who have chosen evil.
 - 2) It starts with **Stalking, Accompanying, and Embracing**
 - 3) It's a relationship that goes awry
3. We journey towards sin; it doesn't happen overnight.
 - a. It's a deterioration of lifestyle that's all too common for people.
 - b. The more we start to entertain evil, the higher the likelihood we will succumb to it
 - c. The Scripture suggests a different route.

Verses 2,3

² but whose delight is in the law of the LORD,
and who meditates on his law day and night.
³ That person is like a tree planted by streams of water,
which yields its fruit in season
and whose leaf does not wither—
whatever they do prospers.

1. But blessed is the one whose delight is the law/Torah
 - a. The person who thinks about these things day and night.
 - b. Doesn't mean reading constantly, but keeping a Scriptural mindset*
*Obviously, this can't happen if you don't read it.
 - c. Are you worried about going astray? Just give your mind over to the Lord.
2. A metaphor for those who follow: **the tree planted by the stream**
 - a. Tree by the water is an understandable metaphor in the Palestine
 - b. "Yields its fruit/leaves don't wither" = An Eternal harvest
3. The eternal overtones are critical to understand.
 - a. We've seen how this fails: sometimes the righteous have issues.
 - b. But devotion to the way of the Lord will work forever.
 - c. As we're looking to bloom this year, let's be people in pursuit of spiritual growth.

Verses 4,5

⁴Not so the wicked!

They are like chaff
that the wind blows away.

⁵Therefore the wicked will not stand in the judgment,
nor sinners in the assembly of the righteous.

1. The text goes back and forth from the wicked and righteous.
 - a. The psalmist is outlining two paths that people can follow.
 - b. The route of the wicked leads towards futility.
2. In an agrarian society, a harvest metaphor made perfect sense
 - a. The **wheat threshing process** involved separating the wheat from the chaff.
 - b. It was done by shoveling the harvested wheat into the air, and the chaff would fly
 - c. Chaff was useless. And so too the plight of the wicked.
3. Here, the poet returns to the thought from the first verse: no more standing . . .
 - a. The wicked would eventually have no place because of their route.

Verse 6

⁶For the LORD watches over the way of the righteous,
but the way of the wicked leads to destruction

1. The conclusion of this psalm is the simplicity of what the book will reveal.
 - a. Perhaps the troublesome aspect of this Psalm for some of us: righteous vs. wicked.
 - b. It is this vernacular, co-opted by American Christians for decades, that's failed us.
 - 1) Many Christians viewed it as an US. vs THEM equation.
 - 2) Thus, texts like this were used as a "war cry" or sense of pride.
 - c. The reality is, this Psalm was written to the people of God to cause reflection.
 - 1) We followers of Christ must declare: which path do we intend to follow?
 - 2) The Dead Sea Scrolls exhibit discusses this
 - a) Archaeology reveals paganism mixed into Jewish worship (**Hatzor**)
2. Alignment with God means walking in his path.
 - a. And how do we understand this path?
 - b. **John 14:6** "I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me."

CONCLUSION

1. There is no better way to start your year, than to embrace the Scriptures
2. IT IS THE SOURCE OF CREATIVE INSPIRATION
 - a. It's the word of God, creator of the cosmos.
 - b. It will both help you see the world differently and solidify your path.

Just like a tree planted by the water.