

A PSALM

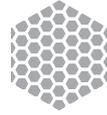
IN YOUR HEART

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Life's Alternatives

PSALM 1

Korean Airline Flight #007 departed Anchorage, Alaska, on October 31, 1983, for its direct flight to Seoul, Korea. However, unknown to the pilot and crew, the computer engaging the flight navigation system contained a one and one-half degree routing error. At the point of departure the mistake was unnoticeable; one hundred miles out the deviation was still so small as to be undetectable. But as the giant 747 continued through the Aleutians and out over the Pacific, the error was picked up by Soviet radar. Jets were scrambled for the intercept, and over mainland Russia Flight #007 was shot out of the sky. All aboard were lost.

A small error made at departure point resulted in a tragic trajectory and a destructive finish.

Psalm 1 presents two possible navigational plans which result in far different endings, and offers a checklist for measuring our direction.

**¹Blessed is the man
who does not walk
in the counsel of the
wicked or stand in the
way of sinners or sit in
the seat of mockers.**

Do I walk in the counsel of the wicked?

Whenever my feelings or emotions or the advice of friends urge me to do what is inconsistent with God's Word, I am presented with "the counsel of the wicked." It is a matter of choosing to live outside God's stated will (as expressed in the Bible) and the inner prompting of the Holy Spirit.

Do I stand in the way of sinners?

Standing means taking a fixed and steady position. I have progressed past walking with the wicked to taking on their point of view. I can be counted on to stand up for my wrong choices and justify my sinful behavior and theirs.

Do I sit in the seat of the mockers?

Sitting is a posture which is finalized. I refuse to be uprooted; I remain fixed in my seat. I scorn and ridicule those seeking God's will and way. Ultimately, my departure from God becomes so extreme I become a critic of God and others—and a foul one at that.

Do I delight in the law of the Lord?

In the depths of depression, hurt, or rebellion, I may resent God's standard. I may feel it precludes my happiness as a person, intrudes on my options, and loads me down with injunctions I neither want nor feel I can obey.

Were it not for the grace of God, I could never delight in His law. It is, however, in choosing to obey Him that the joy progressively comes as I see what He is up to in my life.

Do I meditate continually on His law?

Do I reflect upon His Word—memorizing, studying, and integrating it into my life—and thereby find stability, healing, and restoration?

²But his delight is in the law of the LORD, and on his law he meditates day and night. ³He is like a tree planted by streams of water, which yields its fruit in season and whose leaf does not wither. Whatever he does prospers.

My answer to these five questions determines my destiny. There are only two possibilities for my future: prosperity and permanence or impermanence and void.

If I forsake the postures of walking, standing, and sitting with the wicked and embrace waiting upon the Lord, delight in His Word, and meditating thereon, my life becomes like a tree planted by streams of water, whose leaf does not wither, bearing fruit in season.

On the other hand, I can become like chaff, which, on the threshing floor is separated from the grain when tossed by a pitchfork into the air. It blows away while the more substantial grain falls back to the floor.

In the end the wicked are lightweights, persons of no real substance or depth of character—rootless, weightless, and useless.

There are two ways in life—only two. “The Lord watches over the way of the righteous, but the way of the wicked will perish” (v. 6).

The security of the believer does not come from personal obeisance and effort. It is the Lord who watches over his way.

You and I choose which word will describe our destiny, now and eternally. We need not be on an errant path as Flight #007; but by daily choosing to follow Christ, complete the exact course laid out for us. (See 2 Timothy 4:7; Hebrews 12:1,2.)

**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 assem-
bly of the righteous.**

**⁶For the LORD
watches over the way
of the righteous, but
the way of the wicked
will perish.**

Prayer of response

Lord Jesus, in the events of this day may I find myself in the path of the blessed. Keep my heart from evil—from walking, standing, or sitting in the places of the heart and mind where I ought not to be. May I delight in You and Your Word, and may my inner thoughts be open to and upon You moment by moment.

My thoughts on Psalm 1 . . .

From All the Saints

PSALM 150

My friend Elizabeth Mittelstaedt, founder and publisher of *Lydia* magazine (the largest evangelical periodical in Europe), told me the story about a fidgety little boy in church who pulled on his tight shirt collar and stared at the hat of the lady in front of him. He was bored by the sermon that should have been over already.

His big brown eyes wandered around the sanctuary and became glued on the stained-glass windows. In those windows were men and women in a sea of colors, and they radiated as uniquely formed gems—in contrast to the stern faces of the people in the pews around him.

“Mommy,” he whispered not too quietly, “who are those people in the windows up there?”

“Saints,” she snapped back. “Now, be quiet.”

The next day in religion class the teacher asked, “Can someone describe a saint to me?”

The little boy, excited, squiggly and impatient, waved his hand and said, “I can. I can.”

“Yes, good Tobias,” the teacher said. “Explain it to us.”

“They are colorful, transparent, and the sun shines through them,” he said.

“And how would you know that?” the teacher asked.

“I saw them yesterday in the church stained-glass windows,” he said.

**¹Praise the LORD.
Praise God in his
sanctuary; praise him
in his mighty
heavens.**

Perspective on the past

As we look at the very last psalm, we find those colorful, transparent, and sun-shining-through-them saints closing the Bible’s hymnbook, the

Psalter, with one final great hallelujah. Throughout the psalms we have witnessed the continual example of godly persons praying during the great personal problems, deeply staining sins, tragic personal misfortune, physical illness, advancing age, overwhelming adversaries and obstacles, lonely valleys of depression, feelings of abandonment by others and even God, hurt and anger, and unrelenting sorrow. They struggled with unanswered prayers, delayed answers, denied answers.

But they also celebrated victories of God's intervention and kept returning to express their trust in the Lord even when they did not understand what He was up to, or why He seemed so long in coming to their aid.

In short, the prayers of the saints in the psalms are just like our own. A true saint hides nothing. He or she doesn't wear a slick gloss of cosmetic perfection, as though neither a worry nor a dark thought has ever crossed the mind. No, saints are those colorful and transparent people who, in the many-hued circumstances of life, keep letting the Son shine through them.

Praise now and evermore

Then comes the time for the last hallelujah, the final amen.

All ends well in God. Life has a successful resolution. God kept His word and worked for the good in your life. There were days when you did not see where He was taking you or what good He was doing for you—but now eternity makes it all so plain. Nothing but joy awaits. No more recitation of sorrow or need; just pure, unrelenting satisfaction

and fullness. The final psalm shows not even a ripple of discontent.

At the end, you are a singing fountain. As with all the praise psalms, you are encouraged to take the song you sing then and jam it into the present. Move the future joy into the present hour. If Psalm 150 marks the exit song for all saints, then why not sing it today?

Verse 1 gives the *where* of praise—the sanctuary and the heavens. The sanctuary on earth may be multiple: the temple in Jerusalem for the Psalmist, the church for the body of Christ, the heart for each individual believer. But praise ascends beyond earthly containment into the very sanctuary of heaven itself.

Verse 2 gives the *why* of praise. Exalt Him for His deeds and His character. Praise Him for His acts of power in your own life—even those you disagreed with and fought against. Sometimes He hurt you to protect you from a greater harm. Everything He did or did not do for you arose out of His love. No one could be more faithful, kind, just, loving, and full of mercy.

Verses 3–5 give us the *how* of praise. Eight instruments are named, plus dance. Dancing represents the body overcome with joy—the profound surge of emotion attached to this high moment of release and boundless happiness.

Verse 6 gives us the *who* of praise—everything that has breath. Do you have breath today? Then praise Him.

²Praise him for his acts of power; praise him for his surpassing greatness.

³Praise him with the sounding of the trumpet, praise him with the harp and lyre, ⁴praise him with tambourine and dancing, praise him with the strings and flute, ⁵praise him with the clash of cymbals, praise him with resounding cymbals.

⁶Let everything that has breath praise the LORD. Praise the LORD.

Prayer of response

Lord Jesus, as I close the Psalms I lift my voice in one final act of praise. Thank You for Your presence in the canyon valleys, for being with me on the long upward trail. Thank You for sustaining me. You never left me nor forsook me. I praise You today, Lord. My life comes from You and will one day return to You. Help me daily to be Your colorful, transparent, and Son-shining-through saint.

My thoughts on Psalm 150 . . .

About the Author

The son of missionary parents to China and Tibet, George O. Wood holds a doctoral degree in pastoral theology from Fuller Theological Seminary in Pasadena, California, and a juris doctorate from Western State University College of Law in Fullerton, California. He did his undergraduate work at Evangel University (College) in Springfield, Missouri, and served the college in several capacities, including being director of spiritual life and student life from 1965 to 1971. Dr. Wood was ordained with the Southern Missouri District of the Assemblies of God in 1967.

Dr. Wood was elected as general superintendent of the Assemblies of God in August of 2007. Prior to his current post, he was general secretary for the Assemblies of God from 1993 to 2007. Before that, he was assistant superintendent of the Southern California District from 1988 to 1993. He also pastored Newport-Mesa Christian Center in Costa Mesa, California, for seventeen years. During his tenure, the church experienced significant growth, relocated and constructed new facilities, and gave one million dollars to world missions in the last biennium of his pastorate.

Dr. Wood is author of seven books which include *Living Fully*, *The Successful Life*, and a college text on the Book of Acts. He also is an attorney and a member of the California State Bar.

Dr. Wood and his wife, Jewel, have a daughter and a son.