

## Monday Evening Bible Reading Group: September 4: PSALM 1: Some Notes

Psalm 1

The Message

**1** How well God must like you—

you don't walk in the ruts of those blind-as-bats,  
you don't stand with the good-for-nothings,  
you don't take your seat among the know-it-alls.

**2-3** Instead you thrill to GOD's Word,  
you chew on Scripture day and night.

You're a tree replanted in Eden,  
bearing fresh fruit every month,  
Never dropping a leaf,  
always in blossom.

**4-5** You're not at all like the wicked,  
who are mere windblown dust—  
Without defense in court,  
unfit company for innocent people.

**6** GOD charts the road you take.  
The road *they* take leads to nowhere.

**Brian Foley wrote a hymn based on Psalm 1 which is well worth reading:**

The Law of God is life to choose.

The Will of God is joy to see,

The Word of God is truth to speak,

The Love of God brings love to be!

The Law of God is no mere list

Of things to do and not to do.

But God's perfection - this alone

The yes and no of all we do.

The Will of God must be our will.

To wish, to want, to do, to be;  
And with the mind of God, to think,  
And through the eyes of God to see.  
The Word of God, the voice of God,  
Was through his Servant-Prophets heard,  
In time, fore-telling One-to-Come –  
His Servant-Son, his living Word  
The Love of God is God Himself –  
Most precious gift that he can give –  
To be in us the cause of love,  
To fill with love the life we live.  
Then make the Law of God our law,  
The Will of God our chosen ways,  
The Word of God our firmest faith,  
And God himself our endless praise.

So, avoid ignorance, avoid inertia, avoid vanity; keep fresh, stay concentrated, seek God's guidelines. Here in an introduction to the Book of Psalms (but probably written after the return from Exile, is an introduction to two different ways of living. It doesn't deny that bad things happen to good people; but asserts that good living is rewarding in itself...and good people are better at dealing with bad things. The psalm begins with the first letter of the Hebrew alphabet, and ends with its last letter: so, a whole life agenda. Trees mature over a long period. Not so much God walking out on bad people as bad people walking away from God: the three bad ways of living represent progressively worse behaviour.

All bad and all good is not the message; but we need God's help in shaping our lives the right way: responsive obedience, fruitful hope. This is classed as a Wisdom Psalm. Note that, in contrast to the Pharisee caricature, obedience to the Law is here characterised as a joyful response to a gift given in Love. (Not grudging obedience or earning escape from divine retribution.)

English word meanings are a complication: Blessed? Happy? Fortunate? The Christian is less someone with a perpetual grin and unmitigated good luck, but someone with perpetual hope and a lot of resilience. Just been talking to someone aged 30, now confined to a wheelchair for some years, and with the prospect of a number of operations. He was empathising with various elderly people we both know who are going through a tough time; and giving thanks that he can still get out and about. That's what I call Christian positivity.