

WHO DOES GOD BLESS?



1. God blesses some people and not others.

Psalm one begins by directing our attention to the blessed person and then immediately begins to describe this person by contrasting him with the wicked—the unblessed.

So what is the basic truth? Everyone is not blessed. This psalm will clearly reveal two categories of people – the blessed and the unblessed (the wicked).

2. Who are the wicked? ... a *theological* perspective ...

A. The wicked is a phrase that God chose to use in the Bible to describe a general category of people who live by the way of this world and not the way of God.

All humans are born into this world as the wicked, the unredeemed, dead in trespasses and sins, following the ways of this world.

- (Romans 3:23 ESV) All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.
- (Ephesians 2:1–2a ESV) And you were dead in the trespasses and sins 2 in which you once walked, following the course of this world.

B. Two categories of the wicked.

- i. The blatantly wicked who openly deny even the existence of God and are unashamed, even proud, of living in opposition to God.
- ii. The religious wicked who profess to know God but in reality deny the one true God.

The religious wicked deny in their beliefs and actions the reality of God and the gospel as revealed in holy Scripture. Many in this particular category of the wicked are thoroughly convinced they have a personal relationship with Jesus Christ. The most outstanding example of this group we find in Matthew seven.

- (Matthew 7:21–23 ESV) Not everyone who says to me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ will enter the kingdom of heaven, but the one who does the will of my Father who is in heaven. 22 On that day many will say to me, ‘Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name, and cast out demons in your name, and do many mighty works in your name?’ 23 And then will I declare to them, ‘I never knew you; depart from me, you workers of lawlessness.’

C. Finally, so what is the ultimate difference between the wicked and the righteous? Belief in Christ alone by grace alone through faith alone for salvation.

- (1 Corinthians 15:3–4 ESV) For I delivered to you as of first importance

what I also received: that Christ died for our sins in accordance with the Scriptures, 4 that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day in accordance with the Scriptures.

- (Ephesians 2:8–9 ESV) For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, 9 not a result of works, so that no one may boast.

3. God blesses everyone through his *common* grace and some by his *saving* grace.

A. God blesses certain people through a saving grace by faith relationship with him through Jesus Christ.

B. God also blesses everyone in one way or another through his common grace.

C. Every good gift of life, every enjoyment of life on this earth on whomever it falls, saint and sinner alike, is a gift from God.

- (Matthew 5:45b ESV) For he makes his sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the just and on the unjust.

D. The book of Ecclesiastes speaks of this gift of the life of common grace under the sun in view of our tragic existence because of the fall.

- (Ecclesiastes 1:13 NLT) I devoted myself to search for understanding and to explore by wisdom everything being done under heaven. I soon discovered that God has dealt a tragic existence to the human race.
- (Ecclesiastes 5:18–19 ESV) Behold, what I have seen to be good and fitting is to eat and drink and find enjoyment in all the toil with which one toils under the sun the few days of his life that God has given him, for this is his lot. 19 Everyone also to whom God has given wealth and possessions and power to enjoy them, and to accept his lot and rejoice in his toil—this is the gift of God.

E. The hidden danger is that many people mistake the common grace blessing of God with the saving grace blessing of God.

Religion by nature of what it is does this sort of thing as it feeds the natural human inclination to revise what God says to make allowance for a self-chosen lifestyle. Often the proof they offer of their relationship with God is their religious service and that he blesses them ... and they proceed to recite their good health, happy family, successful career, good works, etc. In doing so they deceive themselves as to what it means to be truly blessed by God.

4. Who are the wicked? ... a biblical perspective ...

A. The counsel of the wicked is far from God.

- (Job 21:16b ESV) The counsel of the wicked is far from me.

B. The counsels of the wicked are deceitful.

- (Proverbs 12:5 ESV) The thoughts of the righteous are just; the counsels of the wicked are deceitful.

C. The LORD is far from the wicked.

- (Proverbs 15:29 ESV) The LORD is far from the wicked, but he hears the prayer of the righteous.

D. The wicked do not serve God.

- (Malachi 3:18 ESV) Then once more you shall see the distinction between the righteous and the wicked, between one who serves God and one who does not serve him.

E. The wicked do not have faith in God.

- (2 Thessalonians 3:2 ESV) And that we may be delivered from wicked and evil men. For not all have faith.

F. The wicked do not abide in the teaching of Christ and so do wicked works.

- (2 John 9–11 ESV) Everyone who goes on ahead and does not abide in the teaching of Christ, does not have God. Whoever abides in the teaching has both the Father and the Son. 10 If anyone comes to you and does not bring this teaching, do not receive him into your house or give him any greeting, 11 for whoever greets him takes part in his wicked works.

5. Who are the righteous?

A. The righteous are those who live by faith in God.

- (Romans 1:16–17 ESV) For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek. 17 For in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith for faith, as it is written, "The righteous shall live by faith."
- (Galatians 2:20 ESV) I have been crucified with Christ. It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me. And the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me.

- (Hebrews 10:37–38 ESV) For, "Yet a little while, and the coming one will come and will not delay; 38 but my righteous one shall live by faith, and if he shrinks back, my soul has no pleasure in him."

6. In Psalm 1 God tells us who he blesses.

A. God begins by describing the blessed person by contrasting his way of life with the way of life of those he does not bless—the wicked.

- (Psalm 1:1 ESV) 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.

The word counsel means something that provides direction, advice or purpose as to a decision or course of action. The blessed look to God for direction in life as opposed to the wicked who choose their own way.

B. The blessed person does not live by the counsel or advice of sinners who are hostile to God.

C. The blessed person does not take his stand with those who disobey or neglect the word of God.

D. The blessed person does not take a seat and so join the assembly of scoffers who jeer, mock, treat with contempt, make their mouth at or talk arrogantly.

E. The blessed person is described by his relationship to the word of God.

- (Psalm 1:2 ESV) But his delight is in the law of the LORD, and on his law he meditates day and night.

"But" notes that the lifestyle of the blessed person is not only different than the wicked but is also contrary to that of the wicked. The specific difference here is his deep, transforming relationship with the word of God which speaks to his joy of God's involvement in his life.

- (Psalm 112:1 ESV) Praise the Lord! Blessed is the man who fears the Lord, who greatly delights in his commandments!
- (Psalm 119:35 ESV) Lead me in the path of your commandments, for I delight in it.
- (Psalm 119:47 ESV) ... I find my delight in your commandments, which I love.
- (Psalm 119:92–93 ESV) If your law had not been my delight, I would have perished in my affliction. 93 I will never forget your precepts, for by them you have given me life.

F. The blessed person is the righteous person—the one who is made righteous by the blood of Jesus Christ.

- (2 Corinthians 5:21 ESV) For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.
- (1 Peter 1:18–19 ESV) Knowing that you were ransomed from the futile ways inherited from your forefathers, not with perishable things such as silver or gold, 19 but with the precious blood of Christ, like that of a lamb without blemish or spot.

G. The blessed person is described as a planted tree that is enduringly fruitful.

- (Psalm 1:3 ESV) 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.
- (Isaiah 61:3 ESV) ... to grant to those who mourn in Zion—to give them a beautiful headdress instead of ashes, the oil of gladness instead of mourning, the garment of praise instead of a faint spirit; that they may be called oaks of righteousness, the planting of the LORD, that he may be glorified.
- (Jeremiah 17:7–8 ESV) Blessed is the man who trusts in the LORD, whose trust is the LORD. 8 He is like a tree planted by water, that sends out its roots by the stream, and does not fear when heat comes, for its leaves remain green, and is not anxious in the year of drought, for it does not cease to bear fruit.

7. The wicked are dramatically different than the blessed, the righteous.

To accept this truth our approach must be entirely dependent on the word of God or we will never overcome our finite, flawed human tendencies.

- (Psalm 1:4–5 ESV) The wicked are not so, but are like chaff that the wind drives away. 5 Therefore the wicked will not stand in the judgment, nor sinners in the congregation of the righteous.
- A. They are not blessed by God as are the righteous.
- B. The wicked do not live by the counsel of God, are hostile to God and are guilty of unconfessed sin.
- C. The wicked disobey and neglect the word of God and stand with others who do likewise.

- D. The wicked are those who join the crowd of scoffers in jeering, mocking and arrogant talk.
- E. The wicked are like chaff that the wind drives away.
- F. The wicked will have no standing in the judgment.
- G. The wicked will not be present in the gathered assembly of the righteous in heaven.

8. The Lord watches over and is intimately aware of the way of the righteous and leads them to life.

- (Psalm 1:6 NIV) For the LORD watches over the way of the righteous, but the way of the wicked leads to destruction.
- A. The parallelism here contrasts a way of life that leads to life and a way of life that ends in destruction.
- B. Jesus portrays this as the difference between those who seek life by entering by the narrow gate and those who disobey and choose the wide gate and the easy way that leads to destruction.
- (Matthew 7:13–14 ESV) Enter by the narrow gate. For the gate is wide and the way is easy that leads to destruction, and those who enter by it are many. 14 For the gate is narrow and the way is hard that leads to life, and those who find it are few.
- C. The deadly mistake that most people make is to choose the way that seems right to them.
- (Proverbs 14:12 NLT) There is a path before each person that seems right, but it ends in death.

CONCLUSION: My hope is that now we will understand, or better understand, and accept three truths that are very real faith challenges for our human minds ...

CHALLENGE #1: We need to accept that many, maybe even most, of the people God describes as "the wicked" are good people by the standards of this world.

CHALLENGE #2: We need to trust God for the courage and love to share the Jesus of revelation no matter the cost.

CHALLENGE #3: We must believe God's promise of blessing for our lives no matter our personal turmoil and confusion ... but while doing so we must accept and submit to the reality that God blesses in his way and in his time, not our way, not our time.