

Who Are the Ungodly?

“Blessed is the man that walks not (yes, “walks not”) in the counsel of the ungodly, nor stands in the way of sinners, nor sits in the seat of the scornful. But his delight is in the law of the Lord; and in his law doth he meditate day and night. **And he shall be like a tree planted by the rivers of water**, that brings forth his fruit in his season; his leaf also shall not wither; and whatsoever he does shall prosper” Psalm 1:1-3)

“The ungodly are not so: but are like the chaff which the wind drives away” (Psalm 1:4).

Who are the ungodly? Are they the people who openly and defiantly take God's name in vain, curse, and blaspheme -- people who break the law of the land --people who are not to be trusted with liberty?

Certainly these are included, but they are not mainly intended. *These are the sinners.* Yet, there is still this group that is targeted by the word *ungodly*. Who are the ungodly? Is the term ungodly just a religious-exercise in name calling?

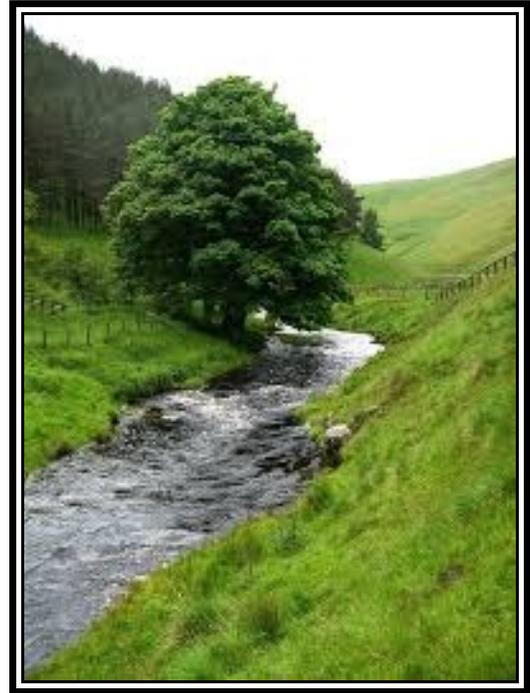
Are they the people who deny God's existence, neglect outward forms of religion & scoff at everything that is sacred? Certainly these are included, but neither are these the people intended. *These are the scorners.* ***There are actually four classes of people mentioned in the Psalm:***

First, the Ungodly, Their sin may be the sin of omission, they have no time for God; they are busy with, what seems like, essential things. They are ungodly primarily because they do not consider the things of God important. They cast off fear of God, then proceed to live in *neglect* of duty toward God. However, if they do not stop there, they progress a step farther to become sinners.

So, the next person mentioned is the sinner. With the sinner, omissions make way for commissions and by these the heart is so hardened that they may well go on to become *scorners* --which is, the third classification of people. Sin is down hill --ungodly; then, sinners; then, scorners. The fourth category is the godly.

The sequence is as follows:

The ungodly has no time for God and lives in neglect of duty toward God. God plays no part in his or her daily life or plans.



Next, the sinner is determined to practice sin and set it up as his or her trade.

Then, the scornful, who is a composite of the first two --plus, he has set his mouth against the heavens.

The fourth person is the *Godly person*. This is the happy one in the four classifications. This person walks his or her own path, resisting the paths of the other three. This person can see that the rest are like chaff, with no weight or stability. He or she can see what happens to them when the wind blows.

We sometimes call people irreligious; to be irreligious is bad enough, but to be religious is not good enough. One may be religious and still not be Godly. There are many who are religious, as touching the law outwardly, they are blameless, Hebrew of the Hebrews, Pharisees of the straightest. They neglect no ritual; they break no law. Still, they rank with the ungodly, for to be religious is one thing, to be Godly is quite another.

To be Godly is to have a constant eye toward God, to recognize him in all things, to trust him, to love him, to serve him, to exist for him. One important Christian catechism asks, "What is man's chief end?" and answers, "To glorify God and enjoy him forever."

The ungodly does not have an eye on God in his or her daily concerns, but lives in the world as if there were no God. They may attend to some outward things of religion, but God has no real meaning for them in daily life. When they hear preaching or come to the house of God, or pray, they bow their heads, but they do not, at the same time, bow their hearts at throne of God. The words are, to them, as any other words. They are religious, not Godly. Nor is their life lived in the presence of God, -the conscious presence of God. This is the ungodly person. But the Godly person, whether he eats or drinks, or whatever, he or she does it to the glory of the Lord Jesus.

If you do not acknowledge God in your dealings with people, and do your business *as if* there were no God to please, then, in this sense, you are ungodly. Do you seek private prayer? Do you try to draw near God? Do you love to sit at the feet of Christ and learn --as did Mary? Perhaps you are not addicted to drugs, or do not swear; you're not a thief or a harlot. Yet, if you do not care about the things of God, how are you Godly? We must not be looking around, saying, I wonder how this will suit my neighbor. For there are none of us as Godly as we could or should be.

The text may be divided into three parts:

First, You have a negative, "The ungodly are **not** so."

Second, You have a comparison, "They are **like** chaff."

Third, You have a prophecy, "The wind **will** drive them away."

First, the negative. The original is very negative; it reads: "Not so, the ungodly, not so." Now, in order to understand the negative, you must also see the positive. Verse 3, *The Godly Man*: "And he shall be like a tree planted by the rivers of water, that bring forth his fruit in his season; his leaf also shall not wither; and whatsoever he does shall prosper." Of course, you must take care, not to be too careless with your

interpretation of that word *prosper*. Some people can lose the entire spiritual intention of the passage by turning it material --don't do that; it's not what the Bible is about.

"Not so, the ungodly, not so." The ungodly are not like a tree *planted*. A tree that is *planted* is cared for, watched and valued by the planter. It is planted in a location advantageous to the tree, and will benefit the one who planted it. It is not a tree planted by a chance wind, out on some desert, or in the crevice of a rock that has not much soil. The tree is planted where it may be visited by the farmer; he or she prunes it; digs about it; protects it; fertilizes it; values it; and looks for its fruit. It is an object of ownership & care. And it is planted where it will do the most good.

You see, the righteous person is bought with a price. Peter said, that price is not silver or gold, but the precious blood of Christ. The wild tree, the tree that is sown by chance, no one owns it, no one watches over it, no one cares for it. Now the ungodly have full access to God's common provision to people; the sunshine, the rain, the harvest & grain.. But the righteous have the special protection of God; they are "trees planted." The Lord is their gardener.

Everything which takes place, will somehow, work for good. It may not seem good at the time, but it is good. Every year that we have a drought, this tree reaches down deeper for water, and thus becomes a little more secure. Many things come into our lives that seem bad, but accomplish great good.

"For this slight momentary affliction is preparing us for an eternal weight of glory beyond all measure, because we look not at what can be seen; for what can be seen is temporary, but what cannot be seen is eternal" (2 Corinthians 4:17 NRSV). Things are good on the basis of, if they accomplish things that count. True prosperity is: love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness & temperance. These are the things that make you cry softly in the movies, or while reading a book. These are things that make you say, "I'm sorry."

We must all live and die, so far as this life is concerned; why should we then think hard things are all bad? The eye of the Lord is fixed upon that "tree planted." Verse 6, "For the Lord knows the way of the righteous." His omniscient eye is fixed on that tree. He does not pay that kind of attention to the ungodly. The Godly becomes like a tree planted by the canals in Eastern countries, which flourishes and is fruitful, while other trees that are less favorably situated are withered by the drought of the rainless desert summers.

The roots of the tree of the righteous are constantly watered by God. They are always secure, because God starts with the roots. Lives must be built with roots. When we come to the New Testament, we hear Jesus saying, "I am the water of life." "He that drinks of the water that I shall give him will never thirst" (John 4:14). A tree without water is a dead tree, and of course, a fruitless tree.

May we, as Christians, rejoice that our store house is inexhaustible; we are as trees planted by *rivers* of water. We will not thirst.

It is said of the Godly, "that they yield their fruit in its season." "Not so, the ungodly, not so." They bring forth no fruit; there is no product from their lives, no value to God. Now, we are getting close to the meaning of *prosper*. Have you done nothing for Christ? Are you a fruitless tree? What is the product of your life? Do you have your roots into the living water of Christ? Now, I believe that not only will the Christian prosper in the eternal future, but also in the here and now. "Whatsoever he does will prosper." Godly people, it is true, have many tribulations, but I do not think they have more than the wicked or the ungodly.

Christian values are the best business values. Honesty really *is* the best policy. Respect for other business people is a prosperous idea. How often do we see people who are in business to run others out, who are soon out themselves.

Christians do not have a great deal of trouble with the law. Christians do not waste their resources and ruin their health with bad habits. A soft answer *does* turn away wrath, and so forth. The Christian way *is* the happy way. A "forgiving heart" *is* the only way to peace and reconciliation --and so on. These are ways of prosperity, folk --they are the ways of Christ.

Second, the ungodly are like the chaff. They are light and worthless as chaff. No solid principle of piety is found in them; nor is there much in their character which makes them substantial.

To the careless observer, they may look like wheat, but the fan soon discovers how empty and unsubstantial they are. When the judge of the world comes, he will come with, "His fan is in his hand, and he will thoroughly purge his floor, and gather the wheat into his granary; but the chaff will blow away." (Matthew 3:12) One has value, the other is nothing.

Third, a prediction. The wind will blow them away. How near the chaff is to the grain, they grow together. The fact that your mother or father or sister or brother is a Christian in the truest sense of the word, does not take care of you. You need to get your own roots into the water. Jesus said, "I am the **way** (the prosperous way), the truth and the life, no one comes to the Father except by Me." There is no other way. Why? Because, "the **way** of the ungodly shall perish." It should; it's not a good way.

The good way is the "Jesus Way." And what is the Jesus way? "Do unto others as you would have them do unto you." "Love the Lord your God with all your heart, soul and mind; and love your neighbor as yourself." "Pray for (yes) your enemies." "Judge not, that you be not judged." "Father forgive them..." "Forgive, if you would be forgiven." It is the "Way of the cross" --of course. Why do we think that the Christian Church sings, "The way of the cross leads home?"

Truth and goodness are remarkable. Deny them all you want --they remain what they are. They will always be there. You cannot get rid of them. Why? Because truth is still truth. Jesus is truth. You cannot make truth go away. It is too determined. In the end, wrong is just wrong --it will blow away.