

*Gary Click*  
U.S. Representative, Ohio

*Psalm 1:2-3*

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# The Cascade Toward Corruption in Office



Corruption in office is a serious matter that results in severe consequences, not only for officeholders and their associates, but also for political parties and even for nations.

Since this dishonesty is so costly a matter in government, what can we do proactively to prevent it? Since corruption does not happen overnight, what lies specifically at its headwaters? The Old Testament (OT) psalmist speaks to the progression of corruption in his first psalm.

In this study we take a closer look at these six verses and glean God's wisdom about this serious and ruinous matter.

Read on, my friend.

Ralph Drollinger

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CATEGORY

Gary Click

Ohio State Representative



“There are so many legislators in Ohio who are believers, but we all need that weekly inspiration from other men of God. Being a pastor myself, as well as a legislator, sometimes it’s nice for me to be fed instead of being the one who is feeding other people. I am thankful for everything Pastor Brian Hanson and Pastor Brian Solomon do. I am thankful for everything Capitol Ministries does and for other CapMin ministry leaders in whatever sphere of influence they are working. Persevere. Don’t become discouraged.

“I like what John Quincy Adams said, ‘Duty is ours; results are God’s.’ Sometimes you might not feel like you are getting through or accomplishing what you want to accomplish, but God is always at work whenever you are in obedience to Him.

“People like me need people like you. God bless you; keep up the great work!”

I. INTRODUCTION

The first psalm of the OT serves as an apt introduction to all the Psalms, and in a real sense, it is a sound-bite summary of the whole Bible. The scope of what follows is a description of two possible paths that all people choose between on the road to their final destiny. The psalm consists of two contrasting cycles of descriptors. Verses 1–3 depict the godly in contrast to verse 4, which depicts the ungodly. The ends of these two paths are compared in the final two verses. Take note of these contrasting descriptors as you read through the passage:

*How blessed is the man who does not walk in the counsel of the wicked, nor stand in the path of sinners, nor sit in the seat of scoffers! But his delight is in the law of the LORD, and in His law he meditates day and night. He will be like a tree firmly planted by streams of water, which yields its fruit in its season and its leaf does not wither; and in whatever he does, he prospers. The wicked are not so, but they are like chaff which the wind drives away. Therefore the wicked will not stand in the judgment, nor sinners in the assembly of the righteous. For the LORD knows the way of the righteous, but the way of the wicked will perish.*

The parallelism of this psalm represents finely crafted poetic expression in its highest form. This is beautiful, chiasmic poetry, which Merriam-Webster defines as “the inversion of the order of syntactical elements in the second of two juxtaposed and syntactically parallel phrases or clauses.” That’s to say, the psalm ends in contrast to the way it started.

The following outline is a verse-by-verse exposition of Psalm 1. Wise is the public servant who reads, studies, meditates, and applies these simple, powerful words daily.

II. VERSE 1

A. HOW BLESSED IS THE MAN

From at least three perspectives, the word *blessed* (*esher*), which means “happy,” is an accurate descriptor of a righteous *man*:

1. **Oneself**  
He or she senses personal blessedness (cf. Matthew 5:3–11).
2. **Family, friends, and others**  
They sense they are blessed by him or her (cf. Genesis 49:28 and Proverbs 31:28).
3. **National leaders and the aggregate prosperity of a nation**  
A country’s citizens sense they are manifestly blessed by him or her (cf. Psalm 72).

Notice in greater detail this third perspective of *blessedness*. The following three passages illustrate and elaborate on the direct relationship between the righteousness of governing authorities and God’s *blessing* of a nation:

*“Since Abraham will surely become a great and mighty nation, and in him all the nations of the earth will be blessed”* (Genesis 18:18).

*By the blessing of the upright a city is exalted, but by the mouth of the wicked it is torn down* (Proverbs 11:11).



*Righteousness exalts a nation, but sin is a disgrace to any people* (Proverbs 14:34).

Indeed, from the viewpoint of a nation's citizens, *how blessed is the man* or woman who provides righteous leadership! Given this relationship between righteous public servants and national *blessedness*, is it not critically important that one of the highest priorities of the Church should be the evangelism and discipleship of present and future governing authorities? (cf. 1 Timothy 2:1-4; Acts 9:15)

The psalmist now states the reason a person is blessed. He deliberately avoids the following sequential downward spiral: *walking* with, *standing* with, and then *sitting* with wicked influences. Observe the visual drift toward evil that is exemplified by these words! The righteous leader remains incorrupt by the grace of God and his awareness and development of an acute sensitivity to this tendency and the meaning of these downward steps. These leaders train themselves to be cognizant of *incremental moral erosion*. The following is an elaboration on each of these three steps of corruption.

**B. WHO DOES NOT WALK IN THE COUNSEL OF THE WICKED**

To *walk in the counsel of the wicked* means we begin to accept the world and *believe* like it. At first, allegiance seems almost imperceptible; subtle is the rub. Herein is *consideration* of the advice of the wicked and openness (versus rejection) in our thinking.

**C. NOR STAND IN THE PATH OF SINNERS**

To *stand in the path of sinners* means we begin not only to believe but also to *behave* like the world. Herein we start to be *compliant* with the ways of the wicked.

**D. NOR SIT IN THE SEAT OF SCOFFERS**

To *sit in the seat of scoffers* means we take yet another step: we decide to *belong* to the world and adopt its immoral and corrupt ways of doing business; we are now *complicit* with the ways of the wicked. We are okay hanging out with *scoffers* who are bottom-of-the-barrel sinners and characteristically mock God's ways.

Believing



Behaving



Belonging

Many past governing officials have personified this three-step sequence toward corruption.

Our conduct and character will deteriorate rather quickly if we are not mindful of the need to avoid and reject the *walking* → *standing* → *sitting* current of worldly influences. Awareness and avoidance are especially necessary in the surrealistic environment of the world's most powerful city.

VERSE OF THE WEEK

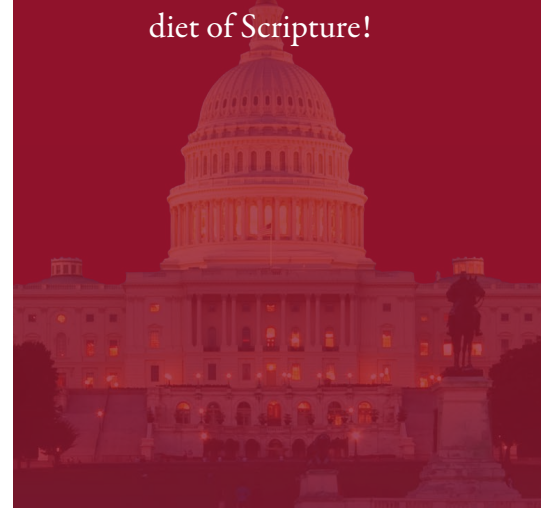


**Psalm 1:2-3**

*But his delight is in the law of the Lord, and in His law he meditates day and night. He will be like a tree firmly planted by streams of water, which yields its fruit in its season and its leaf does not wither; and in whatever he does, he prospers.*



Every Christian needs a consistent diet of Scripture!





James McHenry



“Bibles are strong protections. Where they abound, men cannot pursue wicked courses and at the same time enjoy quiet conscience.”

— James McHenry, American Revolutionary War officer, signer and ratifier of the U.S. Constitution, Secretary of War under Presidents George Washington and John Adams.

Bernard C. Steiner, *One Hundred and Ten Years of Bible Society Work in Maryland, 1810–1920* (Baltimore: Maryland Bible Society, 1921), 14.

States C. S. Lewis:

What makes this contact with wicked people so difficult is that to handle the situation successfully requires not merely good intentions. ... It is therefore ... mere prudence to avoid it when we can.<sup>1</sup>

Where are you in this sequence? Notice how Joseph responded to the cunning ways of his master’s wife in Genesis 39:12:

*She caught him by his garment, saying, “Lie with me!” And he left his garment in her hand and fled, and went outside.*

Joseph *fled* from her advances. Wise is the public official who flees the presence of the corrupt. Whereas *walking*, *standing*, and *sitting*, or *believing*, *behaving*, and *belonging*, or *consideration*, *compliance*, and *complicity* are indicative of a slow drift in the wrong direction, *fleeing* represents an immediate and sudden change in the right direction.

First Corinthians 10:13 states that God will always provide a way to escape temptation:

*No temptation has overtaken you but such as is common to man; and God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will provide the way of escape also, so that you will be able to endure it.*

III. VERSE 2

To put off evil and expect to avoid corruption is not enough. We must fill

the void with the pursuit of righteousness to avoid corruption.

A. BUT HIS DELIGHT IS IN THE LAW OF THE LORD

Distinguished from someone who is affected by evil are those who choose instead to *delight* (*chephets*), meaning “to find good pleasure,” in God’s instruction. This intentionally contrasting passage implies that whatever serves to shape our beliefs will inform and determine our behavior. In Joshua 1:8, God makes this connection.

*“This book of the law shall not depart from your mouth, but you shall meditate on it day and night, so that you may be careful to do according to all that is written in it; for then you will make your way prosperous, and then you will have success”* (Joshua 1:8).

The *law of the LORD* (*torah*), which means “instruction,” is an OT synonym for the whole of Scripture. Solomon states in Proverbs 3:1–2 a parallel sense of understanding:

*My son, do not forget my teaching, but let your heart keep my commandments; for length of days and years of life and peace they will add to you.*

If we conscientiously choose to allow the Word of God—instead of evil-doers—to influence our thinking, it follows that we will meditate on His law day and night.

B. AND IN HIS LAW HE MEDITATES DAY AND NIGHT

To *meditate* (*hagah*), meaning to muse and ponder on God’s instructions *day*



*and night*, is to habitually invest time and energy with God. A wise person invests his or her time meditating in lieu of talking to, hanging out with, and befriending evil people. States the psalmist in 34:8:

*O taste and see that the LORD is good; how blessed is the man who takes refuge in Him!*

The Hebrew word for *refuge* (*chasah*) carries with it the idea of seeking God's shelter, His sanctuary.

**At the D.C. level of public office, most elected officials have Type A personalities, and for them, spending time in solitude with God does not come easily.**

Don't think you are alone in this struggle! Work to discipline yourself to muse and ponder God's presence, greatness, and blessing on a regular, daily basis. Such a habit will prove to bring refreshment and strength to your inner soul and become a want of your heart—that is, if you train yourself! To *meditate* on the Word and taste the presence of God will ensure the following.

#### IV. VERSE 3

##### A. HE WILL BE LIKE A TREE FIRMLY PLANTED BY STREAMS OF WATER

The psalmist now turns to a beautiful, imaginative simile to sell and drive home his point—especially for those

residing in Palestinian geography. What follows is a picture of stark contrast—training our roots to penetrate the Word is similar to a tree near water. This metaphor is easily pictured.

##### B. AND ITS LEAF DOES NOT WITHER

Herein depicted is an evergreen tree versus a deciduous variety, signifying that an ongoing righteous influence and impact on the Hill are normative for those who thirst for the Word of God!

##### C. AND IN WHATEVER HE DOES, HE PROSPERS

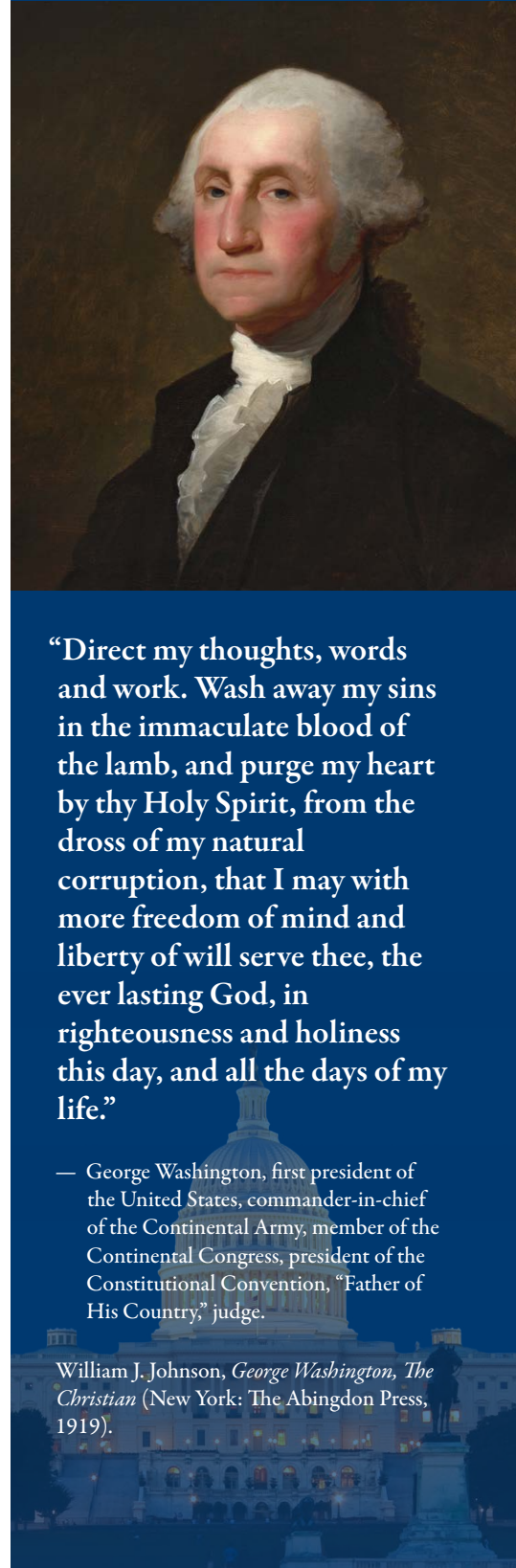
Those who avoid evil and delight in the *torah* will naturally, continually *prosper*.

Jeremiah 17:5–8 elaborates on this Psalm 1 contrast:

*Thus says the LORD, "Cursed is the man who trusts in mankind and makes flesh his strength, and whose heart turns away from the LORD. For he will be like a bush in the desert and will not see when prosperity comes, but will live in stony wastes in the wilderness, a land of salt without inhabitant. Blessed is the man who trusts in the LORD and whose trust is the LORD. For he will be like a tree planted by the water, that extends its roots by a stream and will not fear when the heat comes; but its leaves will be green, and it will not be anxious in a year of drought nor cease to yield fruit."*

What an amazing word picture and contrasting promise! This passage

George Washington



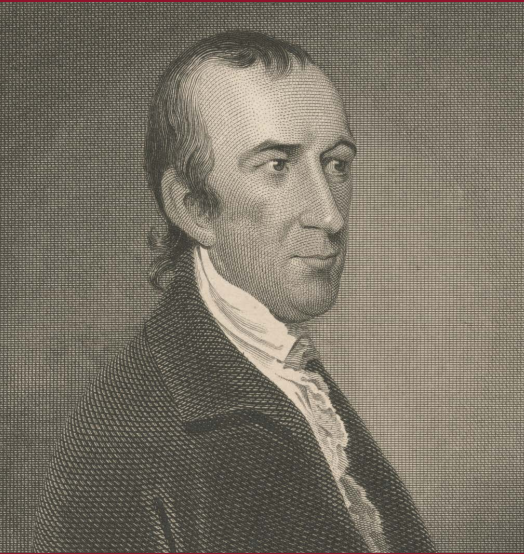
“Direct my thoughts, words and work. Wash away my sins in the immaculate blood of the lamb, and purge my heart by thy Holy Spirit, from the dross of my natural corruption, that I may with more freedom of mind and liberty of will serve thee, the ever lasting God, in righteousness and holiness this day, and all the days of my life.”

— George Washington, first president of the United States, commander-in-chief of the Continental Army, member of the Continental Congress, president of the Constitutional Convention, “Father of His Country,” judge.

William J. Johnson, *George Washington, The Christian* (New York: The Abingdon Press, 1919).



Thomas Stone



“Shun all giddy, loose, and wicked company; they will corrupt and lead you into vice and bring you to ruin. Seek the company of sober, virtuous and good people ... which will lead [you] to solid happiness.”

— Thomas Stone, signer of the Declaration of Independence, selected as a delegate to the Constitutional Convention, lawyer, member of the committee that formed the Articles of Confederation in 1777, served as president of Congress in 1784.

John Sanderson, *Biography of the Signers to the Declaration of Independence*, Vol. IX (Philadelphia: R. W. Pomeroy, 1824), 333, Thomas Stone to his son, October 1787.

adds the idea that everyone has trials and tribulation (cf. James 1), but the man or woman steeped in God’s instruction (*torah*) will much more easily weather the inevitable droughts of life! These stanzas describe someone who is *strong in the Lord and in the strength of His might* (Ephesians 6:10). Notice this same theme near the end of the Sermon on the Mount in Matthew 7:24–27. Instead of making use of a simile of the arid climate, Jesus speaks in stormy prose:

*“Therefore everyone who hears these words of Mine and acts on them, may be compared to a wise man who built his house on the rock. And the rain fell, and the floods came, and the winds blew and slammed against that house; and yet it did not fall, for it had been founded on the rock. Everyone who hears these words of Mine and does not act on them, will be like a foolish man who built his house on the sand. The rain fell, and the floods came, and the winds blew and slammed against that house; and it fell—and great was its fall.”*

Scripture is replete with the formula for stable living in a world chock-full of evil influences, pictured both by drought and flood. Cultivate a diet stuffed with the Word of God!

**V. VERSE 4**

**A. THE WICKED ARE NOT SO**

Similar to the contrasts previously cited in Jeremiah and Matthew, the psalmist establishes the same juxtaposition.

**B. BUT THEY ARE LIKE CHAFF WHICH THE WIND DRIVES AWAY**

*Chaff* is rootless, weightless, and soon disappears. The writer pictures the winnowing of wheat, wherein the person using the pitchfork throws the grain into the air and the straw blows away. The slightest breeze of righteous choice can put to flight a world of evildoers.

**Vast in their presence,  
the wicked are  
lightweights in substance.**

Their fabric has no strength, offering little of real value to society. If flimsiness is their biblical assessment, then why follow them? Why be corrupted by them? In their selfishness, they soon disappear, and even if they seem to prosper for a season, their eternal destiny is ponderous.

**VI. VERSE 5**

**A. THEREFORE THE WICKED WILL NOT STAND IN THE JUDGMENT**

*Therefore* introduces the conclusion. *The wicked* do not meet God’s approval. Excerpts from Isaiah 2:11–17 vividly illuminate this reality.

*The proud look of man will be abased and the loftiness of man will be humbled, and the LORD alone will be exalted in that day. For the LORD of hosts will have a day of reckoning against everyone who is proud and lofty and against everyone who is lifted up, that he may be abased. ... The pride of man will be humbled and the*



*loftiness of men will be abased; and the LORD alone will be exalted in that day.*

Again, knowing the eternal destiny of such individuals, why would anyone be tempted or influenced by them in the present?

### B. NOR SINNERS IN THE ASSEMBLY OF THE RIGHTEOUS

Not only do the wicked collapse before God's righteous eternal evaluation, but they suffer expulsion from others in God's kingdom. The outcome of such a life is hugely and forever costly.

## VII. VERSE 6

### A. FOR THE LORD KNOWS THE WAY OF THE RIGHTEOUS

God *knows* (*yada*) the way of the righteous. *Yada* elsewhere is used to describe the intimate relationship between a husband and wife (cf. Genesis 4:1). In this passage, *knows* carries the same sense of close communion and concern, more so than the idea of omniscience. God has a deep commitment and loving care for His own; He protects and directs, shepherds, and leads those whom He has bought at great price. We do not serve a faraway, impersonal deity. God is both infinite and intimate; what a comfort and blessing to realize this truth!

*The way* refers to the same metaphoric imagery as at the beginning of the psalm, where verse one talks about *the path of sinners*. The phrase *the way of the righteous* is juxtaposed with the following phrase, *the way of the wick-*

*ed*. Both convey the major theme of a person's overall direction: one route leads to life and the other to death. The psalmist's hope is that this insight will prove helpful as we choose our destiny.

### B. BUT THE WAY OF THE WICKED WILL PERISH

True to its chiasmic form, having begun with the *blessing* of the *righteous*, the psalmist ends with the disaster of the *wicked*. Whereas *the way of the righteous* leads somewhere, *the way of the wicked* leads nowhere. When Messiah judges, sinners will be no more; their ruination is an oft-stated fact throughout God's Word. In contrast to the righteous who prosper, the plans, aspirations, and dreams of the *wicked* end in unfulfilled want and frustration. Grief, not achievement, is their end.

## VIII. SUMMARY

Psalm 1 is about the outcome of every individual during this life and the next. The major theme of this poem is already written on the heart of every individual, forming the underlying subject matter of most good novels and movies. This passage also explains why such works resonate in the hearts of all who read or watch. An inviolate principle of the universe, understood by all (unless reprobate), is this: in the end, the righteous triumph and the wicked perish. Therein is the inevitable, predictable, natural outcome of the two respective paths in life.

**Ultimately, the cure for corruption in office is the same cure for corruption in the heart.**



NOW AVAILABLE

The book of Acts records how a small band of men—the apostles—in very short order *turned the world upside down* (Acts 17:6, KJV) during the first century in which they lived. This small team of uneducated, common men were not elite leaders, so how were they able to saturate the world with the gospel—changing lives, changing culture, and eventually changing the Roman Empire?

Scripture provides the answer: not only did they fulfill the Great Commission one soul at a time through a ministry of geometric evangelism and discipleship, but they succeeded *by concentrating on and impacting a particular element of society, specifically kings and all who are in authority* (1 Timothy 2:1–4).

*All in Authority: Reigniting the Bible's Top-Down Missions Strategy* provides the biblical exegesis for this missional strategy that is found in both the Old and New Testaments. The book provides a clarion call for the Church to make political public servants a priority mission field in our nation today. Request your complimentary copy at [capmin.org](http://capmin.org).



## The Cascade Toward Corruption in Office

Every governing official needs to continually choose the objective counsel of God’s Book over the subjective counsel of the ungodly. As the renowned evangelist Dwight L. Moody often said, “Either sin will keep you from this Book, or this Book will keep you from sin.” That message is the fundamental choice everyone must make daily in this life.

must choose between two gates: the broad gate that leads to destruction or the narrow gate that leads to life. In context, the narrow gate relates to a person’s placing his faith in Christ alone for salvation. Therein too is bequeathed the empowerment of the Holy Spirit to live according to God’s precepts. Trust in Christ today and be empowered to walk in His ways!

In Matthew 7:13–14, Jesus Himself speaks about this choice. He said you

1. C. S. Lewis, *Reflections on the Psalms* (New York: Harper One, 2017), 41.



*Making Disciples  
of Jesus Christ  
in the Political Arena  
Throughout the World*



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