

The Greek Psalter: A Reader's Devotional

Greek Text with Vocabulary and Commentary

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The Old Testament in Greek According to the Septuagint, edited by Henry Barclay Swete. From data supplied by Christoph Jasinski under a CC-SA 4.0 License. <https://github.com/sleptillseven/LXX-Swete>. Derived from the Open Greek and Latin Project's First1KGreek project: <https://github.com/OpenGreekAndLatin/First1KGreek/tree/master/data/tlg0527>

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Short Preface

The following few pages is a sample from a Reader's Devotional version of the Greek Psalter. I draw upon a range of sources to offer the Greek psalms with vocabulary help, grammatical commentary, and then thematic reflections on the content of each psalm, Christological interpretation, comments on the LXX's particular translation tendencies, and lastly some thoughts on praying out of the psalm.

The Greek text is derived from Swete, which is in the public domain, digitised as part of the Open Greek and Latin Project's First1KGreek project, and corrected against a print copy.

The vocabulary notes have been done afresh, but I would be remiss not to mention the Reader's Edition of the Septuagint by Lanier and Ross, which has been invaluable in facilitating my own extensive reading in the LXX.

The commentary I offer draws upon a number of sources, including commentaries, books on the psalms, ancient commentators, and my own thoughts. I cite specific sources as needed, and the full volume includes a bibliography.

| | | |
|---|--|----|
| 1 | ΜΑΚΑΡΙΟΣ ἀνὴρ ὃς οὐκ ἐπορεύθη ἐν βουλήῃ ἀσεβῶν, καὶ ἐν ὀδῶ ἀμαρτωλῶν οὐκ ἔστη, καὶ ἐπὶ καθέδραν λοιμῶν οὐκ ἐκάθισεν· | 1 |
| 2 | ἀλλ' ἢ ἐν τῷ νόμῳ Κυρίου τὸ θέλημα αὐτοῦ, καὶ ἐν τῷ νόμῳ αὐτοῦ μελετήσῃ ἡμέρας καὶ νυκτός· | 5 |
| 3 | καὶ ἔσται ὡς τὸ ξύλον τὸ πεφυτευμένον παρὰ τὰς διεξόδους τῶν ὕδατων, ὃ τὸν καρπὸν αὐτοῦ δώσει ἐν καιρῷ αὐτοῦ, καὶ τὸ φύλλον αὐτοῦ οὐκ ἀπορρηθήσεται· καὶ πάντα ὅσα ἂν ποιῇ κατευδοθήσεται. | 10 |

ἀμαρτωλός, ἢ, ὄν: sinful, sinner
ἂν: modal adv.

ἀπορρέω: to flow out

ἀσεβής, ἔς: impious, unholy

βουλή, ἢ: will; counsel; deliberation

δίδωμι: to give

διέξοδος, ἢ: way out; course, route

θέλημα, τό: will, wish, desire

καθέδρα, ἢ: seat, chair, throne

καιρός, ὁ: exact time, season, opportunity

καρπός, ὁ: fruit

κατευδοῶ: to set on the right path, cause to prosper

λοιμός, ὁ: plague, pestilence

μακάριος, α, ον: blessed, happy

μελετάω: to devote care to, meditate

ξύλον, τό: wood; timber; tree

πορεύομαι: to go, travel

ὔδωρ, ὕδατος, τό: water

φύλλον, τό: leaf

φυτεύω: to plant

3 **λοιμῶν:** used in the pl. to speak of disastrous or ruinous people.

4 **ἀλλ' ἢ:** *but rather.* ἢ strengthens the contrast

6-7 **τὰς διεξόδους τῶν ὑδάτων:** *channels of waters.*

9 **ἀπορρηθήσεται:** fut.mid. from ἀπορρύω

10 **ποιῇ:** 3rd pres subj. after ὅσα ἂν.

10 **κατευδοθήσεται:** 3rd sg. fut. pas. *will prosper.*

4 οὐχ οὕτως οἱ ἀσεβεῖς, οὐχ οὕτως, 11

ἀλλ' ἢ ὡς ὁ χνοῦς ὃν ἐκρίπτει ὁ ἄνεμος ἀπὸ προσώπου τῆς γῆς.

5 διὰ τοῦτο οὐκ ἀναστήσονται οἱ ἀσεβεῖς ἐν κρίσει,

οὐδὲ ἁμαρτωλοὶ ἐν βουλῇ δικαίων·

6 ὅτι γινώσκει Κύριος ὁδὸν δικαίων, 15

καὶ ὁδὸς ἀσεβῶν ἀπολεῖται.

20

ἁμαρτωλός, ἡ, ὄν: sinful, sinner

ἄνεμος, ὁ: wind

ἀνίστημι: to stand up; resurrect

ἀπόλλυμι: to destroy

ἀσεβής, ἔς: impious, unholy

βουλή, ἡ: will; counsel; deliberation

γινώσκω: to know, come to know

δίκαιος, α, ον: just, fair, even

ἐκρίπτω: to throw out/away

κρίσις, ἡ: judgment

πρόσωπον, τό: face; person

χνοῦς, ὁ: chaff, dust

13 **ἀναστήσονται:** 3rd sg. fut. mid.

κρίσει: understand: 'Day of Judgment'

16 **ἀπολεῖται:** fut. mid. *will be destroyed*

Commentary

Psalm 1, standing at the beginning of the Psalter, is almost a pre-psalm psalm. It resounds more like Proverbs than Psalms, inviting the reader to enter into the Psalms as wisdom literature, and contrasting the two ways. The text falls naturally into two main parts, and a resolution.

In verses 1-3 we have the way of life, with three stages or steps, marked by *going in the counsel of the impious*, then *standing in the way of sinners*, and lastly *sitting on the seat of the ruinous*. The last is the most fatal, a settled disposition.

The alternative stands in v2 : the νόμος of the Lord. This should be understood in an expansive sense – the Torah, or Instruction, of God, as revealed in the Scriptures as a whole. We are called to meditate on God's instruction, as Theodore says, "One learns to be bound by the law through continuous meditation so that one shapes himself by it. Commentary on Psalms 1:2."²⁹

Keller speaks of the way meditation offers us stability, substance, and ultimately *blessedness*.² We are being invited in this Psalm on how to approach the rest of the psalms – material for meditation, for spending time bringing our mind to attentive rest and restful attention upon the words of God to us and for us. In doing so, we digest the words and internalise them, until they are our own. The result follows in v3, a picture of human life as flourishing.

The alternative is the way of death, as the Didache will later put it. While the wicked may appear to be weighty in this world, they are not people of substance, but ultimately dust, or chaff: light, rootless, destined to destruction.

In verse 6 we have the resolution of the two ways: The Lord is the one who *knows* the way of the righteous. Here is God's active, caring, attentive knowing. This may not be apparent to us now, but it will be clear in the judgment – the day of justice.

²⁹ CCL 88A:8.

¹ Craig A. Blasing and Carmen S. Hardin, eds., [Psalms 1-50](#), Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture (IVP, 2008), 6.

² Tim Keller, *Prayer*, 149-150

In Christ

Augustine points us to recognise that *the* paradigm for the blessed man is Jesus Christ. He is the one who has not gone astray, but his will was always in the Lord's instruction, so that he first flourishes. This should give us pause to reflect – if Jesus's life ended in the cross, we will need to rethink what human flourishing means. Jesus lived his earthly life in meditation on the Scriptures, so that his life was deeply rooted in God's will, and he lived that out in his character at every moment, and the result is blessedness.

What is the ultimate fruit of the ξύλον? Caesarius of Arles suggests that we understand it as the resurrection, which is the fruit of the tree of the cross. Blessedness, in this expansive sense, finds its locus not only in Christ's life, but in his death and resurrection.

Translation

- v1 λοιμοί is found in the plural to refer to ruinous people; it translates
 𐤇𐤓𐤕𐤕 "the scoffers".
- v2 νόμος is used through Pss for the Torah, the instruction of God.
- v3 χνοῦς is any kind of fine dust or powder, but is used for chaff
 specifically.

Prayer

As we pray this psalm, let us thank God for the gift of his instruction, and resolve in prayer to pursue that instruction, making it the daily food of our life. Let us feast upon it "day and night", so that we may follow the example of Christ, and see the fruit of his life, death, and resurrection flourish in our own life, producing stability, character, and true blessing through all our days.