



EXPOSITION

Monthly e-Bulletin from Virginia Beach Theological Seminary



From My Window

Sarah Josepha Hale was an American novelist who is most known as the author of the rhyme, "Mary had a little lamb." However, she is least known as the "force" behind the restoration of Thanksgiving Day as a national holiday. She was not pleased that President Thomas Jefferson discontinued this time-honored tradition. So for more than 30 years she wrote letters, sought appointments with government leaders, and finally in 1863 met with President Abraham Lincoln. He listened to her counsel and eventually proclaimed the fourth Thursday of November as "Thanksgiving Day." Her commitment to promoting a spirit of gratitude in our country is admirable. How committed are we to a spirit of gratitude to God—not just this month—but every day? Psalm 107:1 admonishes, "Oh give thanks to the Lord for he is good!"



Ulys White came to VBTS in 2006 to begin the Master of Divinity program and married Melody the following summer. Together they made a profound impact upon the seminary family, as well as the Colonial Baptist Church (CBC) family. After graduation from seminary in 2011, they were invited to the leadership team of a CBC Adult Bible Studies class and experienced the Lord's blessing through their faithful ministry. After much prayer and counsel, Ulys became a Nuclear and Missiles Operations Officer in the Air Force which led him to the state of Montana in 2017. Just as God burdened his heart to serve our nation in the military, so God has now moved upon his heart to finish his duty with the Air Force and serve as a pastor in a local church setting. Ulys said, "It is a very humbling, yet exciting thought to contemplate teaching God's word and caring for His people." Both Ulys and Melody are ready to minister to Christ's Body and begin their "next tour of duty!" We also are eager to see where his new "duty station" will be. Wherever they serve, they will be a grace-filled demonstration of God's glory in a needy world!



What is the Pursuit of Your Heart? (Psalm 1)

Guest Author: 1st Lt., Ulys J. White, USAF (MDiv, 2011)

The Highwood Mountains dominate the horizon as one looks eastward from the city of Great Falls, Montana. Between the city and the mountains lie countless acres of prairie, which the industrious farmers of this area have transformed into a wheat growing paradise. Starting in late July the verdant spring fields transform into the famous “amber waves of grain.” As the summer progresses, the tabletop fields with the mountain backdrop become punctuated with plumes of ascending dust as the massive combines harvest bushel upon bushel of wheat. The dust plumes are created as the combine harvester separates the wheat from the chaff. All that chaff leaves a dusty haze in the sky as the wind drives it over this vast landscape. This image of bounty and waste is the illustration that sets the stage for our study of Psalm 1.

Psalm 1 can be divided into three thematic sections. Three words will be used to help summarize these sections: Pursuit (vv. 1–2), Productivity (vv. 3–4), and Promise (vv. 5–6). A dichotomy between the “blessed” and the “wicked” man is present in all three sections of this Psalm.

In the first two verses, the *pursuit of the heart* of the wicked is contrasted with the blessed man. The verbs *walk*, *stand*, and *sit* are used to denote the trajectory of life of the one seeking wickedness, sin, and pride. The Hebrew poetry paints a clear picture of what not to do if one desires a favorable relationship with God. In short, do not seek the wicked as your close counselors. Do not follow their example. In contrast to the pursuit of the wicked, we find the pursuit of the blessed man in verse two: “His delight is in the law of the LORD.” God and God’s word is the delight of the one who has found favor with God. The fundamental difference between the wicked and the blessed man is the pursuit of their hearts—what they run toward. One runs toward wickedness, sin, and arrogance; the other runs toward God and His truth.

The word *productivity* summarizes the next section (vv. 3–4). This productivity should be seen in perspective, specifically God’s perspective. The illustration of the “tree planted by streams of water” and the abundant productivity that will flow from the life in due time is true—just as the life of the wicked is as unproductive as the chaff that dims the Montana sky. But ultimate productivity and success is measured by God’s yardstick, not humanity’s. Money, property, and influence are hallmarks of human success, yet these are not as important as humble and righteous acts that flow from a character shaped by God.

Promise is the word that characterizes verses 5–6. Ultimately, God’s word will be proven true, and He will keep his promises. The wicked will see this promise fulfilled in judgment, whereas, the righteous will be known by God. This psalm seeks to draw the contrast between “the wicked” and “the blessed” man so that one finds himself or herself “known” by God instead of “perishing in wickedness.” Psalm 1 invites the reader to enter into the remainder of the Psalter to see the human and divine relationship on display.

In conclusion, Psalm 1 boils down the distinction between the wicked and the righteous to one question: “What is the pursuit of your heart?” The way that you answer this question determines the eternal value of your life. God has gone to great lengths to secure your heart and your salvation by sending His Son, Jesus, to live and die on your behalf. Now Psalm 1 invites you to delight in God, meditate in His word, and enjoy the blessing of your righteous pursuit.