

Psalm 15 • Those Who Biblically Abide in God

Introduction

One of the things to pay attention to in this short Psalm is the back-and-forth contrast of positive attributes and actions— in other words, proactive characteristics, versus those phrased negatively— characteristics which are more reactive in nature. Although this Psalm opens by posing the question as to who is qualified to live in God’s presence, notice that nothing is mentioned about the rituals, offerings, or observances which are associated with the Old Testament Law, but that every instance has to do with one’s treatment of others. In other words, nothing from the first tablet— that is, to love God, is cited and instead everything is an extension of the second tablet to love others. The repeated biblical teaching is that true love and worship of God is impossible without loving others, and the visible evidence in this life of one’s love for God is proven by their love of others.

A Psalm of David.

¹O LORD, who may abide in Your tent?
Who may dwell on Your holy hill?
²He who walks with integrity, and
works righteousness,
And speaks truth in his heart.

Read v.1-2

Q: What is “Your tent” and “Your holy hill” referring to?

A: To God’s house and temple. Actually, in David’s time, the temple was yet to come, and the Tabernacle was still used, but the Ark of the Covenant was brought to Jerusalem and placed in a tent on Mt. Zion. In both cases it refers to not just serving God but worshipping Him.

Q: What is significant about the use of the terms “abide” and “dwell”?

A: This is not referring to a one-time or even regular schedule of visitation, but a permanent lifestyle.

Q: How do we know that this lifestyle is consistently obedient to God’s Word and ways?

A: Because His hill is described as “holy”, referring to something which is set apart exclusively to God and acceptable to come into His presence.

Q: What are the three positive attributes assigned to those who qualify?

1. **“He who walks with integrity...”** “Integrity” can also be translated as “without blemish” or “without spot”, a picture of sin being absent from one’s lifestyle. They are personally walking accord with God’s Word and ways.
2. **“...and works righteousness...”** This describes someone whose deeds and actions are in accord with God’s Word and ways.
3. **“...and speaks truth in his heart”.** This is the visible, external evidence of the spiritual condition of one’s heart, as one’s speech always betrays one’s true spiritual character. (Mk. 7:15)

Application: The true worshippers and servants of God are those whose **walk, works** and **speech** reflect their practice of God’s Word and ways.

³He does not slander with his tongue,
Nor does evil to his neighbor,
Nor takes up a reproach against his
friend;

Read v.3

Q: Against whom, exactly, is the target of these actions? Why is this important?

A: One’s “neighbor” and “friend”. This is not a license to do these things when it comes to enemies and antagonists but is addressing those relationships which are closest to us.

Application: What does the phrase mean, “You’re always hardest on your own?” How easy is it to enter into conflict with those we’re most familiar with? Do we sometimes find it easier to love and respect strangers than our very own?

Q: What, exactly, is “slander”?

A: Another way to translate the underlying Hebrew is “tale bearer”. It describes someone who is actively going out and about to spread lies, someone who is purposely going from person to person or venue to venue like a spy to speak their falsehoods.

⁴In whose eyes a reprobate is despised,
But who honors those who fear the
LORD;
He swears to his own hurt and does not
change;

Q: How is “evil” used here?

A: Not as an inward spiritual condition, but the motivating action or activity; it is the manner in which we treat them.

Q: What does it mean, “Nor takes up a reproach”?

A: This word carries with it the specific connotation of casting blame or scorn on someone. In Hebrew it is the opposite of “to honor” and may be understood as to disgrace or dishonor another. It is something carried out in the spirit of sarcasm or mocking.

Application: Whereas we are supposed to **exhort**, **admonish** and as appropriate, even **rebuke**, such is never carried out in a demeaning manner, especially when it becomes **slander**, **evil**, or a **reproach**.

Read v.4

Q: How has the language changed from v.3?

A: Whereas v.3 lists three qualities which should never be found in someone abiding in God, here are listed three qualities which should be present.

Q: What is a “reprobate”?

A: This is someone who has been rejected by God and left to pursue their own corruption. Such are like Pharaoh who repeatedly hardened his own heart to the Lord to the point that God gave him over to it and divinely hardened Pharaoh’s heart. This is not simply someone who is backslidden or struggling, but wholly devoted to a lifestyle against God and His ways.

Point: This is not an attitude we take with sinners, enemies, or evil doers, but those properly discerned in whom such a condition exists. It is probably not a common condition, but in these Last Days is becoming more and more prevalent.

Q: What is the contrast in the following line?

A: Whereas he despises a reprobate, he “honors those who fear the LORD”. Such are the antithesis of a biblical reprobate.

Q: What does it mean, “He swears by his own hurt”?

A: It describes someone who will keep their word even when it turns out to have deleterious effects on them personally. They “do not change” their promise and follow through even though the outcome is unfavorable or unpleasant.

Application: We must distinguish between the opposite spiritual **extremes** of those who are a **reprobate** vs. those who **fear** the Lord while maintaining our own **integrity** even when it is most difficult.

⁵He does not put out his money at
interest,
Nor does he take a bribe against the
innocent.
He who does these things will never be
shaken.

Read v.5

Q: What do the dual admonitions concerning lending and bribery have in common?

A: They are both references to the misuse of earthly resources where others are concerned.

Q: To what is the promise concerning “these things” referring?

A: It is summarizing all the qualities listed in this Psalm:

- “walks with integrity”
- “works righteousness”
- “speaks truth in his heart”
- “does not slander”
- “nor does evil”
- “nor takes up a reproach”
- Despises “a reprobate”

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- *“honors those who fear the LORD”*
- *“swears to his own hurt”*
- *“does not put his money at interest”*
- *“does not take a bribe”*

Q: And what is the final outcome for possessing these qualities?

A: *“He who does these things will never be shaken.”*

Application: The proof of a life who **walks**, **works**, and **speaks** according to God’s Word and ways is **revealed** in their biblical **treatment** of others.

Overall Application

- *How well do we recognize that our relationship with God is proven by our relationship with others?*
- *How well do we biblically distinguish the difference between a neighbor, friend, true believer, or outright reprobate? Are we hardest on our own?*
- *How well do we keep our word, even to our “own hurt”?*