

Psalm 15

A Psalm of David.

“Psalm 15”: This psalm raises the question of qualifications for service in the tabernacle (verse 1), then answers that question by describing the man who has personal purity (verses 2-3a), and interpersonal integrity (verses 3b-5).

Verses 1-5: Whereas (Psalm 14), focused on the way of the wicked (Psalm 15), concentrates on the way of the righteous (compare Psalm 1). The saved sinner is described as exhibiting indications of ethical integrity. These characteristics alternate in triplets of positive and negative descriptions. The whole psalm unfolds through a question-and-answer vehicle, and indeed it may be regarded as the ultimate Question and Answer session. With its focus on moral responsibility, the psalm offers a sequence of responses to the question of acceptable worship.

- (1) A Two Part Question (15:1).
- (2) A Twelve-Part Response (15:2-5b);
 - A. Three Positively Phrased Ethical Characteristics (15:2).
 - (1) His lifestyle exhibits integrity;
 - (2) His deeds exhibit justice;
 - (3) His speech exhibits reliability.
 - B. Three Negatively Cast Ethical Characteristics (15:3).
 - (1) He does not tread over people with his tongue;
 - (2) He does not harm his fellow man;
 - (3) He does not dump reproach upon family or friend.
 - C. Three Positively Phrased Ethical Characteristics (15:4a-c).
 - (1) He views the reprobate as rejected;
 - (2) He respects the people of God;
 - (3) He holds himself accountable.
 - D. Three Negatively Cast Ethical Characteristics (15:4d-5b).
 - (1) He is not fickle;
 - (2) He is not greedy;
 - (3) He cannot be bought.
- (3) A One-Part Guarantee (15:5c).

Psalm 15:1 "LORD, who shall abide in thy tabernacle? who shall dwell in thy holy hill?"

“Tabernacle” and holy hill” are interchangeable terms that indicate the dwelling place of God and descriptively express intimate fellowship with God (43:3; Exodus 40:34-35; Joel 3:17). “Abide” refers to a temporary condition; “dwell” is a permanent position. The two words suggest a progression from guest to full-time resident in the presence of God. These questions speak not only of being at home with God on earth but also in heaven (24:3-5).

The only one worthy to dwell in the tabernacle is our Lord Jesus Christ. Christians will be admitted, because we have been washed in the blood of the Lamb and made righteous in Jesus. Abide means to continually dwell. Notice who the tabernacle belongs to. The ultimate tabernacle, of course, is heaven. The tabernacle on the earth is God's house (church). No one can approach the holy hill of God, except they go through the Door who is Jesus. In the tabernacle in the wilderness, the world was shut out. It was not that they could not come into the outer court, it was that they did not come close to God. The Holy Place was open to the priests who symbolize all Christians. Before the crucifixion of Jesus only the High Priest could go into the Most Holy Place where God dwelt in the tabernacle in the wilderness. The curtain was torn from the top to the bottom at the death of Jesus' body on the cross. The veil (curtain), symbolized Jesus' flesh. Jesus opened the way for all believers to the very presence of God.

2 Corinthians 5:1 "For we know that if our earthly house of [this] tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God, an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens."

Revelation 21:3 "And I heard a great voice out of heaven saying, Behold, the tabernacle of God [is] with men, and he will dwell with them, and they shall be his people, and God himself shall be with them, [and be] their God."

Verses 2-5: Those who live according to these verses “shall never be moved”. In other words, they will be stable, solid, God-honoring citizens in this world who have nothing to fear. Lives forged in integrity are reinforced as if with steel (2 Peter 1:10).

Psalm 15:2 He that walketh uprightly, and worketh righteousness, and speaketh the truth in his heart.

‘Uprightly’ (sometimes translated “integrity”), conveys the idea of something that is whole, or wholehearted, and sound. The term “righteousness” is fundamental to Old Testament morality and shows that one is in right standing with God and with fellow humans. “Truth” means what is right and trustworthy, not merely correct (Eph. 4:25).

It is as if the Lord answers the question (from verse 1 above). In the natural, no man can live good enough to inherit heaven. Salvation is a free gift of God to all who will believe. The catch is, if you believe, you will want to do things pleasing to God. When you are saved, you become a new creature in Christ. Old things pass away and all things become new. The attributes mentioned above of those who can abide in the tabernacle, and are just what you will want to do after you are saved. Look at the following two verses that Jesus spoke.

John 14:15 "If ye love me, keep my commandments."

John 15:10 "If ye keep my commandments, ye shall abide in my love; even as I have kept my Father's commandments, and abide in his love."

If we walk uprightly, we walk in the Light of Jesus. Worketh righteousness means that he does godly tasks. We see his faith through his good works. From the issue of the heart, the mouth speaketh. A heart stayed upon God, would speak truth. The heart of man is what he is.

Verses 3-4: "Backbiteth" is the word for slander, which means "to wander about on the tongue" and pictures one who walks here and there, pouring out verbal venom and poisoning others behind their backs. The "vile person" is literally a "worthless reprobate", someone who is totally disinterested in spiritual things.

Psalm 15:3 "[He that] backbiteth not with his tongue, nor doeth evil to his neighbor, nor taketh up a reproach against his neighbor."

Is not a slanderer, a defamer, a tale bearer. A backbiter is one who privately, secretly, behind a man's back speaks evil of him, devours and destroys his credit and reputation. The word here used comes from which signifies the "foot", and denotes such a person who goes about from house to house, speaking things he should not (1 Tim. 5:13). And a word from this root signifies spies. And the phrase here may point at such persons who creep into houses, pry into the secrets of families, and divulge them. And many times, represent them in a false light. Such are ranked amongst the worst of men, and are very unfit to be in the society of the saints, or in a church of Christ (see Romans 1:30; 2 Cor. 12:20).

"Nor doeth evil to his neighbor": To any man whatever, good or bad, friend or foe. Whether in a natural, civil, or spiritual relation, either by words or deeds, to his person, property, or good name.

"Nor taketh up, a reproach against his neighbor": Does not raise any scandalous report on him himself, nor will he bear to hear one from another, much less will he spread one. Nor will he suffer one to lie upon his neighbor, but will do all he can to vindicate him, and clear his character.

We see the example above of true believers. They are not like the world. Their tongue is controlled by the Holy Spirit. They do good to their neighbor, and not evil. Jesus said, Love thy neighbor as thyself. Our neighbors should be like our brothers and sisters. We should treat them just as we want them to treat us.

Psalm 15:4 "In whose eyes a vile person is contemned; but he honoreth them that fear the LORD. [He that] sweareth to [his own] hurt, and changeth not."

"Contemned ... honoreth": Whom God rejects, the psalmist rejects; whom God loves, he loves.

We are not only to stand up for the upright person, but we are to condemn sin in the vile person.

Romans 13:7 "Render therefore to all their dues: tribute to whom tribute [is due]; custom to whom custom; fear to whom fear; honor to whom honor." Jesus said swear not.

Matthew 5:34-6 "But I say unto you, Swear not at all; neither by heaven; for it is God's throne:"
"Nor by the earth; for it is his footstool: neither by Jerusalem; for it is the city of the great King."
"Neither shalt thou swear by thy head, because thou canst not make one hair white or black."

Psalm 15:5 "[He that] putteth not out his money to usury, nor taketh reward against the innocent. He that doeth these [things] shall never be moved."

The Israelites were prohibited from charging fellow Israelites "usury" (excessive interest on a loan), but it was acceptable with Gentiles. A "reward" perverts justice or corrupts conduct.

"Interest rates ran as high as 50%, but God's law put strict regulations on borrowing and lending (see notes on Deut. 23:19-20; 24:10-13).

"He ... shall never be moved": This is an important promise in the light of its usage in Psalms and Proverbs (compare Psalms 10:6; 13:4; 16:8; 46:5; 62:2, 6; Prov. 10:30).

Usury is interest on money loaned. It is bad to do to an enemy, and worse to do to a brother in Christ. The Jews were forbidden to charge usury. It is a shame, but the poor, who can ill afford to pay high interest, are the very ones who have to pay unreasonable interest. Their credit is no good, so they pay unreasonable amounts to be able to borrow. The person loaning them this money is not helping them. He is digging them a hole they cannot get out of. Be kind to the poor. Except for the grace of God, you would be that poor. If we were to sum this lesson up in a few words, we would have to say these are instructions on how to get a permanent home in heaven. We are saved by grace and grace alone, but if we are saved we will live our life pleasing to God. The life we live before others would show the love of Jesus.

Psalm 15 Questions

1. Who is the only One worthy to dwell in God's tabernacle?
2. Why will the Christians be admitted?
3. What does abide mean?
4. Where is the ultimate tabernacle?
5. What is God's tabernacle on earth?
6. _____ was open to the priests in the tabernacle in the wilderness.

7. Who was the only one who could go into the Most Holy Place?
8. When was the way to the Father opened to the Christian?
9. The tabernacle of God is with _____.
10. What answer is given in verse 2, to who shall abide in God's tabernacle?
11. Salvation is a free _____.
12. If ye love Me, keep my _____.
13. A heart stayed upon God would speak _____.
14. A believer's tongue is guided by what?
15. We are not only to stand up for the upright person, but are to condemn what?
16. What do we learn from Matthew chapter 5 about swearing?
17. What is usury?
18. Who are those who are required to pay unfair interest?
19. We are saved by grace alone, but if we are saved, how will we live our life?