

THE PSALMS

Series: Selected Psalms Phase 1

Psalm 15: How to Maintain Fellowship with God Psa. 15:1-5

Today's Study: Psa. 15:1-5

1. Questions of the Hour v. 1
2. Qualifying Characteristics Necessary Vv. 2-5a & b
3. Qualitative Reward Assured v. 5c

INTRODUCTION

1. Highlights from Psa. 14:1-7

(a) Occasion on which Psalm 14 was written.

- (1) We do not have specifics as to the occasion upon which the psalm was written. A variety of possibilities have been suggested but they are mere conjectures. It seemed to have been composed under the influence of a heart-rendering conviction of the depth and extent of human depravity, and by observing widespread irreverence and neglect of God.
- (2) In regards to Psalm 14, G. Campbell Morgan notes:
"The thought of the whole psalm is the safety of godliness and the peril of ungodliness."

(b) Denial and Depravity of the Godless Psa. 14:1

- (1) The word **fool** is often used in Scriptures to identify a wicked man—in reality sin is the essence of **folly**.
- (2) Spurgeon notes:
"The atheist is a fool pre-eminently, and a fool universally. He would not deny God if he were not a fool by nature and having denied God it is no marvel that he becomes a fool in practice. Sin is always folly, and as it is the height of sin to attack the existence of the Most High, so it is also the greatest imaginable folly."
- (3) The "**fool**" (Psa. 14:1) is a person who lives as if there is no God. **Fools reveal their rebellion against God in two ways:**
 - **First**, they reject God's revelation, for they do not believe what the Bible says about God; they scorn the moral principles of God's Word and rely on their own ideas to determine what is right and wrong.
 - **Second**, they do not seek God, submit to God's Word, nor pray to God or trust Him concerning their daily lives.
- (4) This phrase "**said in his heart**" (Psa. 14:1a), also reminds us that it is possible to say **in his mind** that there is a God, but deny it in his **heart and life**. The reality is **One may believe in God in theory yet be a practical atheist in the way that he lives.**

- (5) Note the following quote from Preacher's Outline & Sermon Bible
*"The Bible records the life of a man whose name was actually **Nabal**, the word for **fool (1 Sam. 25)**. He was a man who truly lived up to his name (1 Sam. 25:25). In every way, he was an example of the person who denies and defies God. Take a close look at his character and action:*
- *He was crude and harsh (1 Sam. 25:3)*
 - *He was evil and mean in all his dealings (1 Sam. 25:3)*
 - *He was ungrateful (1 Sam. 25:7-11)*
 - *He was uncaring (1 Sam. 25:7-11)*
 - *He was selfish (1 Sam. 25:7-11)*
 - *He was called son of Belial—a selfish worthless scoundrel (1 Sa. 25:17)*
 - *He was unapproachable and unreasonable (1 Sam. 25:17)"*

(c) **Divine Evaluation of Mankind Psa. 14:2-3**

- (1) The all-seeing eyes of God (Psa. 11:4; 33:14; 66:7; etc.) is an important matter that fools have purposely ignored.
- We have in our text (Psa. 14:2) a valid description of God's continuous surveillance of all activities on earth.
 - The posture of God seen in Psa. 14:2a is as if He is literally leaning over heaven and scrutinizing earth's activities (Psa. 139, NB Vv. 6-12).
- (2) The omniscient God always has a clear oversight of all mankind's activities, it's as if observing from a watchtower, or other elevated places of observation; . . . **"The LORD is represented as gazing intently upon men."**
- (3) Psa. 14:2b, notes that God searched for spiritual awareness: **"To see if there are any who understand, who seek God."**
- (4) In Psa. 14:3 we have the result of God's observation noted in verse 2.
- In essence **"turn aside,"** (v. 2) means: **To turn away from God; to fall away from His worship; to an apostate condition!** (1 Sam. 12:20; 2 Kings 18:16; 2 Chron. 25:27; etc.).
 - Every person, at one time or another, has preferred following his or her own selfish way, not acknowledging nor obeying God's righteous commandments; we are guilty, and therefore we need Christ who paid the price for our transgression (Isa. 53:6; etc.)
- (5) **Psa. 14:3 Amp. Bible**
"They are all gone aside, they have all together become filthy; there is none that does good or right, no not one. [Rom. 3:11, 12]."
- Before The Fall, Adam was the embodiment of all purity and goodness. Sin has put a disgraced and debased nature upon man. Man **has become corrupt** (Psa. 14:3b) and **putrid**. All their faculties are so dysfunctional that they have become repugnant to their Maker and purpose why he was created.
 - Depraved man's only alternative is Jesus Christ and His redemption (1 Peter 1:18-19; etc.).

The way of the cross leads home,
 The way of the cross leads home,
 It is sweet to know as I onward go,
 The way of the cross leads home.

(d) **Disregard for Morality and Dread Characterize the Godless Psa. 14:4-6)**

- (1) Psa. 14:4, can be read as: ***“Do they not know, all the workers of iniquity, eating my people, as they bread; Jehovah they call not.”*** There are several statements in this verse confirming the fact of the depravity of the godless.
 - They have no knowledge of God.
 - They find pleasure in the errors and imperfections of the people of God—encouraging themselves in their own wickedness by the fact that the professed friends of God are inconsistent in their lives.
 - They do not call on the name of the LORD, or that they offer no worship to Him.
- (2) It can be difficult to convince sinners of the evil and danger of the way that they live, because they feel secure in their lifestyle.
- (3) As observed in Psa. 14:4, there are three things within this verse that the wicked need to consider but have stubbornly refused to do so: (a) they need to see their wickedness (b) . . . their folly and (c) . . . their danger.
- (4) The inconsistencies of the wicked confirm their godlessness: ***“Who eat up my people as they eat bread”*** (Psa. 14:4).
 - The haters of God’s people actively consume the people of God in the same manner they eat their daily meals (Micah 3:1-3).
 - They find great delight in afflicting the believers and seem to get renewed power when they conquer others.
- (5) Despite the wicked’s consistently outrageous acts, they are deeply troubled and tormented with fear: ***“There they are in great fear”*** (14:5a NKJV): The Hebrew rendered this as: ***“They feared a great fear.”***
 - There is absolutely no doubt that the godless are fully aware that the way they live seriously endanger them!
 - They had great delight in consuming God’s people and it was as if they had drained the blood of the saints but eventually their bowels churned and became the gall of asps (Job 20:12-16).
- (6) The fact conveyed in Psa. 14:5 is that there is undeniable evidence of visible proof that God dwelt among the righteous, and was there friend.
 - The evidence that God was among the righteous would, of course, distress the wicked because of the reality that God was the friend of the righteous, it meant that ultimately He was the enemy of the oppressors of the people of God and such reality exposed them to His wrath.
 - Let scoffers beware, for they persecute the Lord Jesus when they persecute His people; the union is very close between God and His

people; it amounts to a mysterious indwelling, ***“for God is in the generation of the righteous!”*** (Psa. 14:5b).

(7) Despite the taunting opposition of the wicked the righteous poor finds refuge in God (Psa. 14:6a).

Spurgeon note some ways the poor takes counsel:

- *“He takes counsel with his own weakness and sees that he must depend on God.*
- *He takes counsel with his observations and see the end of the wicked.*
- *He takes counsel with the Bible and know it to be the Word of God.*
- *He takes counsel with his own experience and see that God answers prayers.”*

(e) **Deliverance is of the LORD Psa. 14:7**

(1) The psalmist longs for Israel’s complete deliverance from the enemies— which comes when God deals with the wicked in defense of Israel. In general man has been oppressed by his sinful nature and our only way of deliverance is salvation through Jesus Christ.

The psalm ends with a hopeful look forward, to the time when Jesus will come back to establish His earthly kingdom (Rev. 19:11-16). This victory is part of many Old Testament prophecies (Isa. 9:7; Zech. 9:9-10; 14:9-11, 16-20; etc.). With this final triumph over sin, **all** God’s people will have a reason to celebrate.

(2) Quote by Commentator Willem A. VanGemeren:

“The psalmist anticipates an era when God will vindicate His people and deliver them from fools who oppress and harass. In Jesus’ coming Jews and Gentiles are further assured of God’s concern, vindication, and presence with His people. When the Jews are restored to faith in Jesus the Messiah, they will rejoice and all Christians will join with them in giving praise to God’s faithfulness.”

2. **Introduction to Psalm 15**

(a) **Title/Occasion the Psalm was Written**

The psalm is simple titled **“A Psalm of David.”** We do not have information that inform us of the precise occasion for this psalm, but many scholars believe it has to do with the bringing of the Ark of God into Jerusalem (2 Samuel 6). David’s first attempt in transferring the Ark was disastrous (see 2 Sam. 6:1-11); one of the reasons was that it was not done the prescribed way (Deut. 10:8; etc.).

It was a period when David was deeply concerned with the question he asked in Psa. 15:1 as well as the answers noted in verses 2-5. It should be noted that David, on his second attempt followed the prescribed way (2 Sam. 6:12-17; 1

Chron. 15:1-14, NB v. 2) and the Ark was successfully taken to Jerusalem (1 Chron. 15:15-29).

Psalm 15 presents a close resemblance with Psalm 24, which was written when the Ark was taken to the holy hill of Zion. The psalm (15) is classified as *“liturgical,”* meaning: *connected with public worship*. In general *“liturgy”* means: *participation in the sacred through activities reflecting praise, thanksgiving, remembrance, supplication or repentance*. As observed in the account regarding the transfer of the Ark of God to Jerusalem, on both occasions there was an active and robust praise and thanksgiving to God (2 Sam. 6:1-17; 1 Chron. 15:16-24).

(b) **Quotes Introducing Psalm 15**

(1) **Preachers Outline & Study Bible (POSB)**

“It is very similar to Psalm 24, which was written for the occasion (referring to the transfer of the Ark to Jerusalem . . . insert mine). The ark of the covenant represented God’s presence among the people of Israel. The mercy seat of the ark was the precise spot where God’s presence dwelled (Ex. 25:22). This psalm teaches us how to live daily in God’s holy presence—in close fellowship with Him. It is a psalm of instruction and a psalm of examination. . . .”

(2) **Matthew Henry**

“The scope of this short but excellent psalm is to show the way to heaven, and to convince us that, if we would be happy, we must be holy and honest. Christ is Himself the way, and in whom we must walk as our way, has also shown us the same way that is here prescribed in Matt. 19:17 . . . ‘If thou wilt enter into life, keep the commandments.’”

(3) **C. H. Spurgeon**

“Spiritually we have here a description of the man who is a child at home in the Church of God on earth, and who will dwell in the house of the Lord forever above. He is primary Jesus, the perfect man, and in Him all who through grace are conformed to His image.”

3. **Divisions**

(a) Actually there are three things to be noted:

- (1) **First**, the psalm in **verse 1** begins with a question by which we are directed and stirred to earnestly enquire for the way to such an experience—**holiness!**
- (2) **Second**, we are given the answers to the questions in **verses 2 to 5a** and here we are directed how to walk in the way of righteousness.
- (3) **Third**, in **verse 5b** we are given the assurance of the safety and happiness of those who live the essential qualities, noted in verses 2 to 5a and we are encouraged to faithfully and consistently walk in the way of holiness.

(b) **The Three Main Points of our Lesson:**

- (1) Questions of the Hour Psa. 15:1.
- (2) Qualifying Characteristics Necessary Psa. 15:2-5a.
- (3) Qualitative Reward Assured Psa. 15:5b

Psalm 24:3-4 Amplified Bible

"Who shall go up into the mountain of the Lord? Or who shall stand in His Holy Place? He who has clean hands and a pure heart, who has not lifted himself up to falsehood or to what is false, nor sworn deceitfully. [Matt. 5:8]."

Psalm 15:1-2 Amplified Bible

"LORD, WHO shall dwell [temporarily] in Your tabernacle? Who shall dwell [permanently] on Your holy hill? He who walks and lives uprightly and blamelessly, who works rightness and justice and speaks and think the truth in his heart,"

A. Questions of the Hour Psa. 15:1

The psalm begins with two questions (*actually one question which has been repeated*); although they are easily understood their importance should **not** be overlooked! Obviously what is made known from these questions, are not only the desire of **sojourning**, having temporal fellowship with God as the Jews did when they made their long arduous journey to the Tabernacle annually, in Jerusalem, but there is the earnest desire **to dwell, which speaks of permanent** residence, in the very presence of God!

David realized that no human being is flawless (Psa. 51:1-2; 143:2; Rom. 3:23) and any imperfect person in the sight of God would be out of place. The unthinking person may believe that it is a very easy matter to approach the true and Living God, and when they are professedly engaged in His worship there is no requirement as to their fitness for it. However, the truly humbled souls are deeply moved with a sense of unworthiness and what it means to enter the very presence of God, the God of holiness; for us today such is possible through Jesus Christ our Lord, our Advocate (Eph. 2:18; 3:12; Heb. 10:19-22).

The questions are asked in verse 1 and the characteristics necessary are shared in the remaining verses. The listing is not comprehensive but fundamentally important qualities that we cannot afford to ignore. ***Who shall sojourn in this tabernacle?*** Who shall be accounted a true member of God's church, admitted among the spiritual priests to lodge in the courts of this tabernacle? **We are concerned to enquire this, because many pretend to have a place in this tabernacle who really have no part nor lot in this matter.**

Here, we have serious and compelling questions concerning the characters of a citizen of Zion (a) *"Who may sojourn in thy tabernacle?"* (b) *"Who may dwell in thy holy hill?"* (ASV)

“LORD, who may abide in Your tabernacle? Who may dwell in Your holy hill?” (Psa. 15:1 NKJV)

1. **Established Life in God’s Presence** (Psa. 15:1a)

(a) Defining **“abide”** . . . briefly noted:

(1) **“Abide”** is a verb meaning to dwell as a foreigner.

- The term is commonly used by the patriarchs who sojourned in Canaan (Gen. 26:3; 35:27). It refers also to places outside Canaan: Gen. 12:10; 20:1; 21:23; 32:4.
- Other references are noted throughout the Old Testament, for example: (a) Naomi and her family in Moab (Ruth 1:1), (b) the exiles in Babylonia (Babylon) (Jer. 42:15).

(2) **“Abide”** or **“sojourn”** is used reflectively which means to seek hospitality within (1 Kings 17:20).

(3) The idea conveyed for **“abide”** as used in our text is to **“sojourn”**; that is, to abide in a place as a sojourner or a stranger; not permanently.

- The idea is taken from the word **tabernacle** or **tent**, with which one naturally associates the thought of sojourning, rather than that of a permanent abode.
- This does not mean that residence with God would be temporary; the idea of permanency is strongly expressed in **part b of this verse (v. 1)**.

(b) Desire to enter God’s sanctuary (Psa. 15:1a).

“LORD who may abide in Your tabernacle?” (15:1a NKJV)

(1) The tabernacle was a precursor to the Temple in Jerusalem, it was a **moveable place of worship for the children of Israel**. It was where God met with Moses and the people to reveal His will.

- In reality it was a place of worship and was pitched in the center of the Israelites camp during their nomad days and was central in their lives. The presence of God dwelt in the tabernacle, symbolized by the Ark of God which was kept in the Holy of Holies.
- Only the priests were allowed in the tabernacle, and only the High Priest entered the Holy of Holies annually on the day of atonement.
- Although David was king he knew the seriousness of God’s governing rules and as a result he could not enter the tabernacle.
- This holy structure and the laws that controlled its functioning teaches an important lesson about the individual’s relationship with the LORD.

(2) To **abide** in the **tabernacle** of the LORD means to establish one’s life in God.

“LORD who may abide in Your tabernacle?”

- Since the **tabernacle** was the place where man met with God through the work of the priests and the practice of sacrifice, David’s longing to **“abide in Your tabernacle”** was actually a desire to **abide** in the presence of God.
- Basically, what David had in mind was the life one experiences in the presence of God—to walk in close fellowship with God because the heart, the mind and the life are all in step with the heart, mind and life of God.

- As noted above, the actual presence of God dwelt in the Ark that was kept in the Holy of Holies and secured by the veil. David, as a result asked God what was required for a person to experience such magnificent opportunity.
- (3) It was as if David was saying: ***“Jehovah, You are the high and Holy One, who shall be permitted to have fellowship with you?”***
- *“The heavens are not pure in thy sight, and thou chargest thine angels with folly, who then of mortal mould shall dwell with thee, thou dread consuming fire?”* (Spurgeon)
 - *“A sense of the glory of the Lord and of the holiness which becomes His house, His service, and His attendants, excites the humble mind to ask the solemn question before us. Where angels bow with veiled faces, how shall man be able to worship at all?”* (Spurgeon)
- (4) Oh, Beloved! It is indeed a great and wonderful privilege to be a citizen of Zion, an unspeakable honor and privilege—it is not an experience enjoyed by just anyone; it is not obtained because of one’s status, etc. not because Abraham is their father (John 8:39; etc.) but those who have committed themselves wholly to Jesus Christ (Matt. 22:37; James 4:8; etc.).
- It’s my prayer that we take this matter seriously; it should be our pursuit to ask: **“Lord, what shall I be, and do, that I may abide in Your tabernacle?”** (See Luke 18:18’ Acts 16:30).
 - Matthew Henry notes:
“Those that would find the way to heaven must look up to God, must take direction from His Word and beg direction from His Spirit. It is fit He Himself should give laws to His servants, and appoint the conditions of His favors, and tell who are His and who not.”

2. Enduring Relationship with God (Psa. 15:1b)

(a) Presence of God.

This is a subject that we have frequently discussed in our lessons . . . note a few pointers.

- (1) Think of what Christianity would mean and be without the presence of the true and living God!! Without Him in our lives nothing is worthwhile, but with Him, everything can have meaning, purpose and effectiveness.
- (2) I will list seven benefits derived as a result of the presence of God . . . without comments.
 - When we live in fellowship with God we are guaranteed the fullness of joy (Psa. 16:11).
 - By dwelling in the presence of God we are brought under His ultimate protection . . . continuously! (Psa. 91:1; Psa. 121).
 - In the presence of God, we find peace (Ex. 33:14).
 - Dwelling in His presence, He guides and directs us as we spend time with Him (Psa, 73:23-24).

- The presence of God guarantees relief and security from our pains and burdens (Matt. 11:28-30).
- We are changed, refined and transformed in His presence. His presence takes away the worthlessness in our character and makes us better people (2 Cor. 3:18).
- The presence of God guarantees that we are never alone, even if we feel alone, He is always there!! (Matt. 28:20b).

(3) We are to desire to be in the continued presence of God (see **Psa. 42:1-2**).

Time only for a few comments.

- As water is essential for physical life, so God and His presence are essential for satisfaction and wholeness of life. True believers will hunger and thirst for God and His grace, blessing and supernatural activity in their lives.
- To stop thirsting for God is to die spiritually; thus we must not allow anything to diminish our intense desire for the things of God. Beware of the cares of this world, the pursuit of earthly things, and the pleasures that choke out hunger and thirst for God and the desire to seek His face in prayer (Mark 4:19).
- We should pray that our longing for God's presence might be strengthened, our love for the full manifestation of the Holy Spirit might be greater, and our passion to see the fullness of Christ's kingdom and righteousness might be deepened until we cry out to Him day and night in a heartfelt thirst, even as the deer "**pants for the water brooks**" in times of drought (Psa. 42:1; Matt. 5:6; 6:33).

(b) Permanent relationship desired (Psa. 15:1b)

*"Who may **dwell** in Your holy hill?" (v. 1b NKJV)*

(1) One or two questions ... in verse 1? I have noted above that two questions were asked, however, in essence David asked the same question twice.

- The word **dwell** has a more permanent sense than the word **abide** used in the previous line.
- To **dwell** adds to the idea of being at home, a member of the household, having permanent status in the family.
- The question (v. 1b *"Who may dwell in Your holy hill?"*) is asking:
 - Who is qualified to dwell with God?
 - Who may properly be regarded as His friend?
 - Who are entitled to enjoy His favor?
 - Who are regarded as being truly devoted?
 - Etc.

(2) In regards to us today, the same question although stated in another structure implies the same ideas:

- Who is qualified to become a member of the Church?
- Who has the evidence of true conversion and sincerely devoted?
- Who are those who are really prepared for heaven?

- Etc.

(3) By the **holy hill** we may visualize the Church triumphant; referring to Mount Zion, a place of eminence and spiritual significance, not only for the Jews but for believers.

- It is the happiness of glorified saints that dwell in that **holy hill**; they are at home there: they shall be there forever.
- It concerns us to know who shall dwell there so that we may assure ourselves that we shall be among them and may then take comfort and rejoice in the expectation of that **holy hill**!

(4) Beloved, no earthly or Satanic power can tear us away from our dwelling in God's **holy hill** because our hearts are set on Him and we abide in Him!

B. Qualifying Characteristics Necessary Psa. 15:2-5a

It is very important to understand that David already had an existing relationship with God and was not requesting information on how to enter a covenant, about salvation and living in God's presence in heaven. **His focus was centered on his daily walk with God, living with a watchful awareness of God's holy presence.** Beloved, our salvation is not by human effort but we are called to a life of accountability (Note carefully Eph. 2:1-10, NB v. 10). We must not only talk the talk but walk the walk; we have a life to live and a God to glorify, we are to walk worthy of our calling (Eph. 4:1).

"He who walks and lives uprightly and blamelessly . . ." (Psa. 15:2a Amp. Bible). The term **blameless** refers to reputation (character, honor, etc.). As noted in other lessons, **blameless**, does not mean one has never sinned (Rom. 3:23; 1 John 1:8) but signifies someone whose life offers no room for criticism for others (Deut. 18:13; Prov. 29:10; note also 1 Peter 3:16). One outstanding trait in such situation is **honesty**. A righteous person is not only truthful about others, and about themselves, they think honestly about others and themselves.

The righteous knows that it is inconsistent for him to tell lies, speak unkindly of others or to hurt anyone, so he abstains from such acts and maintains his integrity. He is careful who are his associates and seeks to socialize with those who are God honoring. He is aware of the high standards of the righteous' lifestyle and willingly submits; keeping his all focused on eternity with God!

The righteous life is not obtained by animal sacrifices or **ritual purity**, as it was among religions of the ancient Near East, but moral righteousness gives access to the LORD God of Israel (basic covenant law Ex. 20:1-7; also Isa. 1:10-17; 33:14-16; Jer. 7:2-7; etc.)

As we grow in our relationship with our Redeemer, we develop a desire to live by His standards. The depth of our eternal relationship with Him can often be measured by the way we reflect His standards in our daily activities.

Let the beauty of Jesus be seen in me,

All His wonderful passion and purity,
 O thou Spirit divine, all my nature refine,
 Till the beauty of Jesus be seen in me.

1. **Stay in the Path of Righteousness and Speak the Truth** (Psa. 15:2).

“He who walks uprightly, And works righteousness, And speaks the truth in his heart”
 (Psa. 15:2 NKJV).

(a) Walks uprightly (15:2a)

“He who walks uprightly . . .” (15:2a NKJV)

(1) Walking describes a habitual way of living.

- **“He who walks uprightly”** is the same concept used in Gen. 17:1 “. . . **walk before Me and be blameless.**”
- An outstanding holiness scholar, Kirpatrick notes in regards to **blameless (uprightly)**: *“The word **tamin** means (1) **complete**, (2) **without blemish**, of sacrificial victims, (3) in a moral sense, **perfect, sincere, blameless**. It includes whole-hearted devotion to God, and complete integrity in dealing with men.”*

(2) In addition to the definition noted above, the Hebrew meaning for **perfectly** also means that which is complete in all its parts; where no part is wanting or is defective.

(3) Herein, we observe the righteous man’s **walk, it is not just words he speaks** . . . He walks **uprightly!**

- He is like a man **walking a tightrope**, if he leans to one side he will tumble over!
- The thought takes us back to our first lesson when we discussed Psalm 1, there we saw that the righteous:
 - **Stroll not** in the counsel of the ungodly (Psa. 1:1a).
 - **Standeth not** in the way of sinners (Psa. 1:1b).
 - **Sitteth not** in the seat of the scornful (Psa.1:1c).
- We are hereby presented (in our text) a powerful description of Christian Perfection as taught in the New Testament (Matt. 5:48; Heb. 6:1; 1 John 4:17-19 . . . **do not forget** Matt. 22:37-40; Mark 12:29-31. remember it is a way of life for all God’s people see Deut. 6, NB Vv. 3-5).

(4) C. H. Spurgeon notes:

“Walking is of more importance than talking. He only is right who is upright in walk and downright in honesty.”

(b) Works and outward conduct are righteous (15:2b).

“And works righteousness . . .” (15:2b NKJV)

(1) The righteous man’s outward conduct must be right.

- **“Righteousness”** means *“to be strait”* according to rules.
- He does what is virtuous in relation to God and man (see Micah 6:8).
- The necessity to live such lifestyle is seen throughout Scriptures, **the reality is, no man can be a friend of God who does not habitually live in accordance with what is right** (see 1 John 3:1-10, NB Vv. 6-10).

- (2) With God's enabling and his continued humility, surrender and renouncing evil, the righteous man lives the Word of God daily!
- He is not one who only hears but practically applies the Word to his conduct.
 - James 1:22-25
Vv. 23-24 ESV
"For if anyone is a hearer of the word and not a doer, he is like a man who looks intently at his natural face in a mirror. For he looks at himself and goes away and at once forgets what he was like."
 - Note carefully also: **Luke 6:46-49, NB Vv. 47-48**; Matt. 7:21; 12:50; John 13:17; Rom. 2:13; 1 John 2:17; Rev. 22:14.
 - The righteous man's faith demonstrates itself by good works, he knows that faith without works is dead! (James 2:14-26, NB v. 17).
- (3) Spurgeon notes:
"God's house is a hive for workers, not a nest for drones. . . . If we are not positively serving the LORD, and doing His holy will to the best of our power, we may seriously debate our interest in divine things, for trees which bear no fruit must be hewn down and cast in the fire."
- (c) Wholesome and sincere (15:2c)
"And speak the truth in his heart" (15:2c NKJV)
- (1) To **speak the truth in his heart** means to live in absolute sincerity.
- Truth on the lips is important. Truth in the heart is all-important!
 - The psalmist's conviction for needed cleansing was based upon his realization that God **"desire truth in the inward parts"** (see Psa. 51:6-7).
- (2) The righteous man uses language that is sincere and is in conformity with his real belief.
- Such standard of living is opposed to all mere outward professions and all hypocritical deceitfulness.
 - The righteous man's morality has its place in the heart, and is not based on religious formalism. His actions are the expressions of upright intentions and purposes, and are not executed for selfish and hypocritical reasons. He is someone who is genuinely righteous!!
- (3) *"True righteousness consists not only of outer actions but also of inner attitudes. Jesus condemned the Pharisees because their righteousness was merely outward appearance while their hearts were corrupt and void of truth (Matt. 5:20-22; 23:25-28).*
The truth that produces holiness is the truth of God's Word (John 17:17). And the transformation from wickedness to holiness, when it is genuine, begins with the heart. God places His glory within us and changes us into the image of Christ through the work of the Holy Spirit in our hearts." (POSB)

2. **Slander and Other Evil He Abstains from** (Psa. 15:3).

“He who does not backbite with his tongue, Nor does evil to his neighbor, Nor does he take up a reproach against his friend . . .” (15:3 NKJV)

(a) Reputation of others will not be destroyed (15:3a)

“He who does not backbite with his tongue . . .” (15:3a NKJV)

(1) The righteous has **no** slander on his tongue.

- Whether it was individually originated or it was passed on . . . tales that are injurious to the reputation of others is a sin that has no place in the life of Zion’s citizens!!
- As we saw above the righteous speaks the truth and he who holds the truth inwardly will speak only the truth outwardly about others.

(2) The word **backbite** means to consume; slander; reproach; speak evil of.

Based on the Hebrew usage it is associated with a verb form derived from the word **foot**, in essence it means **to foot it**, and then **to go about**.

- Therefore, the **backbiter** goes about as a tale-bearer or slanderer; to spread unfavorable reports to others.
- It is not improperly translated **backbite** in our text; the idea conveyed is that it is essential to true holiness that one **should not** be a slanderer, or **should not** spread around evil reports in regards to others.
- Seemingly, so many do not stop to think of the evil of slander; (as it relates to the tongue see James 3:2-11).

(3) Whether we say backbiting, slander or tale-bearing, it must be realized that God will **not** be in the midst of slanderers!

- He does not approve of or allow slanderous speech among His chosen people (Ex. 20:16; 23:1; Lev. 19:16).
- It should also be realized that whisperers and backbiters are equally listed with murderers and immoral people as the abominable of sinners (see Rom. 1:29-32).
- While so many find great delight in slandering, it should be realized that they will face severe punishment from God for their poisonous tongues (Psa. 101:5; Prov. 19:5, 9; 1 Cor. 6:10; . . . **revilers or verbal abusers**... see 1 Cor. 5:11 note: **“railer” KJV ... “reviler” NKJV**).
- Beloved, it is an established fact that the righteous person abstains from backbiting (slander or tale bearing) and will be blessed with personal peace and the abiding presence of God.

(b) Refrain from ruining others (15:3b)

“Nor does evil to his neighbor . . .” (15:3b NKJV)

(1) The person approved of God does no harm to fellow saints or others.

- The Hebrew suggest all harm (injury), evil, or sin. In simple language he abstains from doing bad things, whether by word or deed to others.
- The idea is that the man who will be admitted to dwell on the **holy hill of Zion (15:1)**, the man who is truly righteous is one who does no injury to anyone; he is one who does what is right to others.

- (2) Quote from POSB (Preacher's Outline & Sermon Bible):
"It is impossible to love God and hate your neighbor (1 John 4:20). Six of the ten commandments that expresses God's holy, moral law are directed to our actions towards others (Ex. 20:1-17). Jesus clearly taught that loving our neighbors is second only to loving God (Mark 12:30-31). If we love our neighbors, we will not sin against them in anyway. However, it is not sufficient to merely refrain from taking action against someone. This also includes not wishing any ill will toward any individual. Remember, God knows our hearts, so our consciences must also be clear toward our neighbors."
- (c) Reproaching others is disdainful and should be abstained from! (15:3c).
"Nor does he take up a reproach against his friend" (15:3c NKJV).
- (1) To **take up a reproach against his neighbor** may mean either to originate slander and ridicule or to pass on what otherwise might not be known.
- Or it may mean to add to another's misfortune by heaping reproach upon him.
 - **"Do you know what I heard?" is the prelude to many a murderous assault upon someone's good name.**
- (2) The picture presented here is that of **taking up**, or receiving as true, or readily giving credit to scandalous accounts.
- The righteous is slow to believe evil of another. He does not latch onto it greedily as if he has pleasure in it.
 - He does not himself formulate such a reproach, nor does he readily and cheerfully credit, it when it is stated by others.
 - If he is compelled to believe it, it is **only** because the evidence becomes so strong that he cannot resist it, and even in believing that it is contrary to the desires of his heart then he will be prayerful and God focused on the matter.
 - There are too many persons to whom nothing is more acceptable than reproachful accusations of others and who embrace no reports more readily than those which ascribe bad conduct or bad motives to them.
- (3) Note three quotes:
- C. H. Spurgeon
"He is a fool if not a knave (rouge, evil-doer, good-for-nothing, etc. ... insert mine) who picks up stolen goods and harbors them; in slander as well as robbery, the receiver is as bad as the thief. If there were not gratified hearers of ill reports, there would be an end of the trade of spreading them."
 - Preacher's Outline & Sermon Bible
"The person who desire to dwell in God's presence will say nothing that is even questionable about others. He or she is careful not to suggest anything that will bring reproach on another person (Prov. 10:12). Quite the opposite, the individual will look ways to edify others and to esteem others better than themselves." (See Rom. 14:19; Phil. 2:3)

- C. H. Spurgeon
“Fire! Fire! is an alarming note, but the tale-bearer’s tongue is set on the fire of hell, and those who indulge it had better mend their manners, or they may find there is fire in hell for unbridled tongues.

Our Lord spake evil of no man, but breathed a prayer for His foes; we must be like Him, or we shall never be with Him.”

3. **Separate from Habitual Sinners/Loves Righteousness and is Reliable** (Psa. 15:4)

“In whose eyes a vile person is despised, But he honors those who fear the LORD; He who swears to his own hurt and does not change.”

(a) Heed carefully taken not to affiliate with the workers of iniquity(15:4a)

“In whose eyes a vile person is despised” (15:4a NKJV)

(1) The thought shared here is that there is a feeling of deep repugnance for the immoral.

- The citizen of Zion does not rejoice in the account of iniquity. Neither does he condone sin and whitewash conduct that is violation of God’s law.
- David knew that we cannot love God unless we also oppose evil.

Prov. 8:13a Amp. Bible

“The reverent fear and worshipful awe of the Lord [includes] the hatred of evil . . .”

(2) The righteous is not liable to show respect to a man of corrupt or bad character on account of his wealth, his position or his popularity in life.

- He knows what constitutes wholesome character and it is not derived from rank, relationship or social class.
- As we saw in the previous verse, the righteous is not inclined to become involved in false or evil report against anyone, he is at the same time resolved to do justice to all, and does not honor those who do not deserve to be honored, or apologize for opposing corrupt conduct because it is committed by one in an exalted position.
- The righteous loves righteousness and holiness, he hates all that is otherwise; and where conduct deserves rebuke, no matter where or who, he does not hesitate to declare his conviction in regards to the matter and yes he knows the wisdom of speaking with Christlikeness.

(3) **It is unfortunate that so many believers invalidate themselves from experiencing continued fellowship with God because they admire, or at least excuse the behavior of the ungodly with whom they are intertwined.**

- Regrettable but true, the people who that they admire, who they look up to habitually, live immoral lives. Some of these debase persons are sports stars, music icons, or other so-called celebrities or even some of their very close associates.

- *“Many of them flaunt their wickedness and perversions proudly, and the media and general public soak up every filthy detail. **Believers, however, are to despise the behavior of such individuals.** If we wish to enter God’s sanctuary and live in His presence, we will neither admire the wicked nor associate with them (2 Cor. 6:14-18)” (POSB) (Emphasis mine)*

(b) Honors God fearing people (15:4b)

“But he honors those who fear the LORD” (15:4b NKJV).

(1) No matter the position or condition of life, there are those who are seriously committed to God.

- The righteous is willing to be known as one who honors fellow believers and is not hesitant to bear any reproach that may be associated with being identified among the righteous.
- He takes into account what it means to be a genuine righteous person and wherever such is found he puts great honor on such person.
- He admires such persons, and esteems them highly in love, desiring their friendship, maintaining contact and their prayers. He is glad for the opportunity to show them respect and encourage them to continue walking with God. Indeed, it is a wonderful thing to be a part of the family of God!

(2) Meticulously, there is great contrast between those who sincerely reverence God and live in obedience to Him in comparison with those who consistently live a sinful lifestyle.

- Indeed, beloved, God’s friends ought to be our friends! By our love the world will know that we are Christians! . . . By our love!!
- Beloved, those that walk with the LORD, we would do well to walk with them! It is so important to seek out and honor those individuals who strive to live for the LORD!

1 Cor. 10:24 NKJV

“Let no one seek his own, but each one the other’s well-being.”

- **“Honors those who fear the LORD ...”** Spurgeon notes:
“we must be as honest in paying respect as in paying our bills. Honor to whom honor is due. To all good men we owe a debt of honor, and we have no right to hand over what is their due to vile persons who happens to be in high places.”

(c) Honesty emphasized and characterizes all business transactions (15:4c)

“He who swears to his own hurt and does not change.” (15:4c NKJV)

(1) The righteous is trustworthy! His word is as good as his bond.

- Promises are made to be kept, unless there would be sin involved in keeping the promise.
- The mere fact that a promise turns out to be disadvantageous to its maker does not relieve him of the obligation to keep it.

- (2) The righteous has made a promise or entered into a contract that may turn out contrary to his expectations, most likely to his disadvantage; but he is still attached to his commitment.
- As noted above the only time anyone is expected to opt out on an agreement is when the act would be sinful, in that case he should immediately abandon it. On the other hand, he is not at liberty to violate an agreement simply because it will be a loss to him or because he discovers it will not be as he expected.
 - The principles laid down here extend to all contracts or agreements, pecuniary (financial) or otherwise, and this should be a general principle regulating all our transactions with our fellow men.

(3) Spurgeon notes:

“The most far-seeing trader may enter into engagements which turn out to be serious losses, but whatsoever else he loses, if he keeps his honor, his losses will be bearable, if that be lost all is lost.”

4. **Scheming and Other Deceptive Acts He Abstains** (Psa. 15:5a & b)

“He who does not put out his money at usury, Nor does he take a bribe against the innocent” (Psa. 15:5a & B NKJV)

(a) Exploitation of others for dishonest gain is abstained from (15:5a)

“He who does not put his money to usury . . .” (15:5a NKJV)

- (1) In general, **“usury”** is sometimes defines as any kind of interest. It formerly refers to legal interest, or a premium for the use of money.
- However, the Hebrew term comes from a root word meaning **“to strike with a sting” as a serpent, or “to oppress.”**
 - As used in our text, it means **interest**, that is a premium or compensation for the use of money in any manner or to any extent.
 - The reference is to the law of the Hebrews, which prohibited the loaning of money to the poor and especially the poor Israelites (see Ex. 22:25; Lev. 25:35-38)
 - Although loaning to fellow Israelites was forbidden, yet lending of money with interest or **“usury”** in a lawful sense, was allowed towards “strangers,” or towards people of other nations.
- (2) The fact that it was allowed for the Hebrews to take interest from people of other nations, shows that there was nothing morally wrong in such business transaction.
- Evidently, by the NT period commercial interest was recognized as being legitimate (Matt. 25:27).
 - The very important message being communicated (Psa. 15:5a) has to do with exorbitant or unreasonable interest and this evil practice is a common factor that continues on a large scale in today’s world!

- Spurgeon notes:
“Those who grind poor trades men, needy widows and such like, by charging them interest at intolerable rates, will find that their gold and silver are cankered.”
 - P.O.S.B also notes:
“The truly righteous would never exploit others in their need. Likewise, if we truly care about others, we will use our resources to help them, not to take advantage of their unfortunate circumstances by seeking to profit financially at their expense.”
- (b) Exempt himself from bribery (15:5b)
“Nor does he take a bribe against the innocent.” (15:5b NKJV)
- (1) **“Nor does he take a bribe (reward ... KJV) against the innocent”** ... means: “a bribe against a guiltless person.”
- Bribe was regarded as a curse of Oriental countries, bribery is forbidden in Scriptures (example Ex. 23:7-8; Deut. 16:19; 27:25) and is often condemned by the prophets (example Isa. 1:23; 5:23; Ezek. 22:12-13).
 - **The righteous does not accept financial gifts or compensation or any other solicitous consideration to persuade him to decide a matter against justice.**
 - He is not in anyway, to allow any such considerations to influence him, or to sway his judgment.
 - The righteous is firm and resolute: He will **not** take a **bribe (reward) against the innocent** (or anyone); he will **not** for any benefit, or hope of it, to himself, do anything to the disadvantage of a righteous cause.
- (2) **NOT FOR SALE!!** The righteous is a person of integrity and not for sale!!
- **Here is someone who will not be influenced by the suggestion of achieving monetary or any other such assurances.**
 - In the ancient eastern world, the balance of justice was slanted towards the rich.
 - In both civil and criminal affairs, the wealthy often bribe witnesses and judges; a practice that continues throughout history.
 - As in those ancient days the average citizen, those who were not wealthy, were powerless and oppressed in this corrupt system (Ecc. 4:1-3).
- (3) Spurgeon notes:
“Bribery is a sin both in the giver and the receiver. It was frequently practiced in Eastern courts of Justice; that form of it is now under our excellent judges almost an unheard thing; yet it survives in various forms, which the reader needs not that we should mention; and under every shape it is loathsome to the true man of God. He remembers that Jesus instead of taking reward against the innocent died for the guilty.”

C. Qualitative Reward Assured Psa. 15:5c

“He who does these things shall never be moved.” (15:5c NKJV)

1. Satisfactory Lifestyle

- (a) Answer to the question in verse 1 . . . the reward of the committed is hereby declared.
- (1) We saw at the commencement of this verse (v. 5) that the righteous refused to accept bribes, they do not allow their judgment to be clouded with corruption.
- The pure in heart are single-minded towards God, they are holy and characterized by integrity; they shall see God! (Matt. 5:8).
 - The world places emphasis on things but man’s real life is found **ONLY** in God, we need to have fellowship with the true and living God (see Psa. 16:11).
- (2) This person will not be moved from God’s tabernacle (15:1) . . . that is, from His presence.
- **If we live righteously, we will live in uninterrupted, unbroken fellowship with the LORD.**
 - **We will know the incomparable joy of God’s presence each day of our lives here on earth, and afterward, we will dwell with Him eternally in heaven** (Psa. 23:6).
 - It’s very important to remember that if we are going to persevere (Eph. 6:18) we must be preserved (Jude 1) and we will be preserved only as we abide in Christ and Christ abides in us (John 15:1-8). Whatever it takes to maintain being in the presence of God is worthwhile doing!!

2. Saints are Immovable (Psa. 15:5c)

- (a) Solid foundation established!
- (1) You may want to briefly review the notes above, in particular **“Satisfactory Lifestyle.”** There are too many who profess to be righteous but it all consist of words without living in accordance with God’s standards (Isa. 44:18-23; Matt. 7:15-23; Luke 6:46-49; John 3:19-21; Gal. 6:3; etc.)
- (2) The person who lives righteously will not be encumbered with the repercussion of sin.
- This person will reap the benefits of living a righteous life and receive just as stated in the Word (Gal. 6:7-8; etc.).
 - Perfect love cast out fear (1 John 4:18); therefore, an upright person has no fear of God’s judgment because his sins have been forgiven and he has been enabled to live by God’s standards.
 - The life of righteousness will yield its fruits over and over again and the believer will feast the **“peaceable fruit of righteousness”** all the days of our lives!! (Heb. 12:11).

(b) Safe and secure in the arms of God (15:5c).

"... shall never be moved." (15:5c NKJV)

(1) There will be no hesitation in regards to the status of the righteous man!

- ***"He that doeth these things shall never be moved"*** . . . this may literally be rendered: ***"Doing these things he shall not be moved."***
- Such a man, as described here, will prove to be steadfast and dependable in the midst of changing conditions and circumstances (1 Cor. 15:58).

(2) Those who dwell in the LORD'S presence are always safe!

- The grace of God shall always be sufficient for him to preserve him safe and blameless to the heavenly kingdom.

- Spurgeon notes:

"No storm shall tear him from his foundations, drag him from his anchorage, or uproot him from his place of privilege and blessedness.

... ..

Let us betake ourselves to prayer and self-examination, for this Psalm is a fire for the gold, and as a furnace for silver. Can we endure its testing power?"

Final Thoughts

1. Enjoy and Endure

If you have tasted that the LORD is good, you should desire to grow in the knowledge of the LORD and worship Him. We must stir our desire to dwell with God. It is for this reason that Christ laid down His life; that we may dwell with God. Beloved, walk in the light of His Word! Be glad in the LORD and rejoice!!

2. Matthew Henry notes:

"In singing this psalm we must teach and admonish ourselves, and one another, to answer the characters here given of the citizen of Zion, that we may never be moved from God's tabernacle on earth, and may arrive, at last, at that holy hill where we shall be forever out of the reach of temptation and danger."

3. The song: **"The Presence of the Lord is Here"** (Partial quote)

The presence of the Lord is here
 The presence of the Lord is here
 I feel it in the atmosphere
 The presence of the Lord is here, oh
 The presence of the Lord is here

The power of the Lord is here
 The power of the Lord is here
 I feel it in the atmosphere
 The power of the Lord is here, oh-oh

The power of the Lord is here

2 Cor. 3:17 Amp. Bible

“Now the Lord is the Spirit, and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty (emancipation from bondage, freedom). [Isa. 61:1,2]”

Psa. 95:2 Amp. Bible

“Let us come before His presence with thanksgiving; let us make a joyful noise to Him with songs of praise!”

DO NOT JUST READ THE BIBLE STUDY AND OBEY IT

2 Tim. 2:15 NKJV

“Be diligent to present yourself approved to God, a worker who does not need to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth.”

2 Tim. 3:16 NKJV

“All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work.”

PSALM 15
Review Questions

1. (a) What was the possible occasion on which Psalm 15 was written? (b) Which other psalm is known to be closely associated with Psalm 15 . . . briefly explain?

2. Complete the following... A thought shared by Matthew Henry in regards to Psalm 15. "The (a) _____ of this short but (b) _____ psalm is to show the way to (c) _____, and to (d) _____ us that, if we would be happy, we must be (e) _____ and honest. Christ is Himself the (f) _____, and in whom we must (g) _____ as our way, has also shown us the same way that is here prescribed in Matt. 19:17 ... 'If thou wilt enter into life, keep the (h) _____.'"

3. Briefly define "***abide***" as used in Psa. 15:1.

4. Complete by choosing the correct answer:
 "To ***abide*** in the ***tabernacle*** of the LORD means to _____
 _____." (Thought based on Psa. 15:1).
 (a) become a member in a church.
 (b) establish one's life in God
 (c) establish one's faith as desired.
 (d) anyone can be called God's.

5. (a) briefly explain the importance of the presence of God in our lives. (b) List at least five benefits of the presence of God.

6. Briefly explain the difference between *“abide”* and *“dwell”* as used in Psalm 15:1.

7. By carefully analyzing Psalm 15, on what was David’s thought fully focused; how is this fact related to us today?

8. ***“He who walks uprightly”*** (Psa. 15:2a) . . . (a) Which other Scripture reference presents the same concept? (b) Explain briefly its meaning.

9. Complete by choosing the correct answer ... A quote by C. H. Spurgeon:
“Walking is of more importance than talking. He only is right who is _____.”

- (a) a great speaker but not always reliable.
- (b) charismatic and attracts attention but not honest.
- (c) seemingly upright but in reality talks only.
- (d) upright in walk and downright in honesty.

10. Explain: ***“. . . speak the truth in his heart.”*** as used in Psa. 15:2c.

11. (a) What does the word ***“backbite”*** means and what other terms are associated with it? In essence what does a backslider do? (Psa. 15:3).

12. (a) Answer True or False. (b) Explain your answer.

“Close association with the ungodly and admiring or excusing their bad behavior, will not adversely affect a believer’s relation with God.”

13. Briefly explain: **“He who swears to his own hurt and does not change.”** (Psa. 15:4c NKJV).

14. What two main facts about the righteous has been shared in Psalm. 15:5a, and b?

15. Briefly explain: **“He who does these things shall never be moved”** (Psa. 15:5c NKJV)
