

PSALM 15

I. BIBLICAL TEXT

PSALM 15

Description of a Citizen of Zion.

A Psalm of David

1 *O Lord, who may abide in Your tent? Who may dwell on Your holy hill?* **2** *He who walks with integrity, and works righteousness, and speaks truth in his heart.* **3** *He does not slander with his tongue, nor does evil to his neighbor, nor takes up a reproach against his friend;* **4** *In whose eyes a reprobate is despised, but who honors those who fear the Lord; he swears to his own hurt and does not change;* **5** *He 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.*

II. INTRODUCTION

A. TYPE OF PSALM

- o DIDACTIC—FOR INSTRUCTION—TEACHING

B. AUTHORSHIP

- o **DAVID**—attributed in heading

C. OCCASION

1. POSSIBLY AFTER DAVID MOVED ARK OF COVENANT TO JERUSALEM

- o He built a tent on Mount Zion to shelter the Ark—**II Sam 6:12, 16–17**

2. POSSIBLY GAVE PILGRIMS REQUIREMENTS FOR ENTERING PLACE OF WORSHIP

a. In the Gentile world

- Pagans asked for conditions to enter temples—answered by priests

b. In the Old Testament

1. There were liturgical requirements for entering worship—approaching God

2. Examples

- **Ex 19:10-15**—before approaching Mt. Horeb they had to wash garments and be clean (not touch a woman)
- **I Sam 21:4**—to eat consecrated bread they had to keep themselves from women

3. DIFFERENCES FROM OTHER REQUIREMENTS

- a. Not a list of external liturgical requirements

- Instead—describe how God examines character and searches conscience
- b. Not just for gaining temporary access
 - Instead—for permanently inhabiting in God’s house—as home
 - Like **Ps 23: 6**—*And I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever*

D. THEME

- WHO IS THE GODLY PERSON—WORTHY TO DWELL IN GOD’S HOUSE?

E. STRUCTURE

1. QUESTION AND ANSWER FORMAT

a. Pattern One

- **Verses 1-2**—ask and generally answer basic question—who is righteous?
- **Verses 3-5**—explain answer—each verse illustrating one aspect of righteousness

b. Pattern Two

- **Verse 1**—asks the question—who is righteous?
- **Verses 2-5**—answer the question

2. BALANCED ARRANGEMENT OF PLUS-MINUS PHRASES

- **Verse 2**—three positive verbs
- **Verse 3**—three negatives
- **Verse 4a-b**—three positives
- **Verses 4c-5a-b**—three negatives
- **Verse 5c**—one positive conclusion

F. OUTLINE

Verses 1-2—THE QUESTION AND THE BASIC ANSWER

Verse 1—QUESTION—WHO CAN DWELL WITH GOD

- Who may enter and dwell in God’s house

Verse 2—BASIC ANSWER—THE UPRIGHT PERSON

- Walks with integrity
- Works righteousness
- Speaks truth in his heart

Verses 3-5—ANSWER EXPLAINED

Verse 3—ONE WHO TREATS OTHERS RESPECTFULLY

- Does not slander
- Does no evil
- Does not reproach

Verse 4—ONE WHOSE ALLEGIANCE IS CLEAR AND CONSISTENT

- Does not stand with the despised
- Honors those who fear the Lord
- Remains faithful—even if it hurts

Verse 5—ONE WHOSE DEALINGS ARE HONORABLE

- Does not extort
- Does not bribe

Verse 6—SECURITY OF THE RIGHTEOUS

- He will never be shaken

G. BIBLICAL CONTEXT

1. DESCRIBES THE RIGHTEOUS PERSON

a. Whom several previous Psalms have identified—as being blessed by God

- 1:3—*whatever he does will prosper*
- 3:8—salvation—*Your blessing is on Your people*
- 5:12—*with favor will You surround him as with a shield*
- 11:7—*His countenance looks upon the upright*

b. **Psalm 14**—just identified—as the kind of person who is with God

2. SIMILAR PASSAGES—GIVE REQUIREMENTS FOR ENTERING GOD’S DWELLING

a. **Psalm 24:3-6**

24:3—*Who may ascend into the hill of the Lord, and who may stand in His holy place?*

b. **Is 33:14-17 b**

33:14—*Who among us can live with the consuming fire? Who among us can live with continued burning?*

III. EXPOSITION

A. VERSE 1—QUESTION—WHO CAN DWELL WITH GOD?

1 *O Lord, who may abide in Your tent? Who may dwell on Your holy hill?*

1. THE LORD'S TENT HERE—HAS TWO DIMENSIONS

- a. Place of formal worship/sacrifice—highlighted by term 'holy hill'
 - Hill = Mount Zion—where the Temple was later built
- b. Place of hospitality—highlighted by verbs—'abide' and 'dwell'
 - Goes beyond admittance to worship—to permanent dwelling

2. SPIRITUAL MEANING—NOT JUST THE PHYSICAL TENT AND HILL

a. Tent and holy hill are also symbolic

1. Tent = where God dwells—to be in the presence of God
2. Holy hill = God's home

- See **2:6**—for Mount Zion—symbolic for God's real [spiritual] home = heaven
- Points to one's place in God's heavenly home

b. Tent = also place of spiritual refuge

- **24:5**—*For in the day of trouble He will conceal me in His tabernacle; in the secret place of His tent He will hide me*
- **61:4**—*let me dwell in Your tent forever; let me take refuge in Your wings*

3. FROM PILGRIM TO RESIDENT

❖ There is a progression in the verbs—from transience to residence

a. *Abide*—**guwr**

1. Finding temporary place of rest—from a wandering life—'sojourn'
2. Shrine/altar—welcoming the pilgrim—for devotion/worship
3. Sanctuary—welcoming the refugee—for protection

b. *Dwell*—**shakan**

1. Finding permanent place of settled domestic life
2. Home-coming—for member(s) of the family

4. IMPLICATION

- o Who is 'worthy' to dwell with the Lord?
- o One of His family—in fellowship with Him

- o One who is like the Lord—of the same character

VERSE 2—ANSWER—THE UPRIGHT PERSON

2 *He who walks with integrity, and works righteousness, and speaks truth in his heart*

1. THREE POSITIVE VERBS

- o Walks
- o Works
- o Speaks

2. POSSIBLY—COULD MEAN—TWO DIMENSIONS OF HUMAN BEHAVIOR

a. Two types of actions

- **Outward** actions—walking and working
- **Inward** action—speaking of the heart

b. Emphasis is on thoroughness—wholistic behavior

- **All** of one's activities are pleasing to God

3. PROBABLY—EMPHASIS IS ON

a. Emphasis on thorough consistency of holiness—inside-out

b. Integrating concept—the foremost idea—centers on '**integrity**'

He who walks with integrity

1. **tamiym** = complete, whole, entire, healthy

a. Other translations

1. KJV—sometimes 'perfect' or 'righteous'
2. Sometimes translated 'blameless'

- ◇ Negative term that does not capture its fullness

- ◇ Rather—'whole' or 'wholehearted'

b. Elsewhere in the Psalms

- ▲ Used 10 times—to describe the **upright man** or his **ways**
- ▲ Used twice—to describe the **Lord** or His **law** as **perfect**

2. The way one walks

- a. The whole demeanor and way of life
 - b. One walking as an upright man
 - ▲ **Is 33:15**—the one who makes uprightness his way
 - ▲ **Mic 2:7**—the one walking uprightly
3. **Integrity** = unity of the integer—integrally one
4. The fundamental evidence of a genuinely holy character
- Outward behavior and inner motivation are aligned
 - Both behavior and motivation are good—pleasing to God
- c. **Outward** behavior—*and works righteousness*
1. Righteousness—**tsedeq** = right, just, fair
- a. Fundamental concept of OT morality
 - b. Goal is to be what God created us to be and do
 - c. Unlike other ethical systems that focus on happiness and self-fulfillment
2. ‘Works’—**pa’al** = does, makes
- a. Not only a characteristic or quality
 - b. But action that performs righteous (good) deeds
 - c. **Mic 6:8**—*to love mercy, to do [asah] justice, and to walk humbly*
 - d. **Mt 6:1**—Jesus calls three basic good deeds—‘*acts of righteousness*’
- d. **Inner** motivation—*and speaks truth in his heart*
- a. Truth—**emeth** = sure, verified, reliable, stable
 - ▲ Not just ‘correct’—but trustworthy
 - b. Contrasted with the ungodly
 - ▲ **Ps 12:2**—*They speak falsehood to one another*
 - ▲ **Is 29:13**—*this people draw near with their words and honor Me with their lip service, but they remove their hearts far from Me*
 - c. How this fits with ‘integrity’
 - ▲ What one says and does—is what one is in the heart
 - ▲ What one is in the heart—is what one says and does
 - d. The speech of the heart—points to the speech of the tongue—in **verse 3**

❖ NOTE—VERSES 3-5

- Three independent clauses—acting as relative clauses—describing the righteous
- Perfect tense verbs—function as abstract present tense—habitual mode of action

B. VERSE 3—HE TREATS OTHERS RESPECTFULLY

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

1. 'SLANDER—**ragal**
 - a. 'going around'—to spy out things—**and** spread them abroad
 - The intent being—more to create a scandal—than just mere 'slander'
 - b. KJV = 'backbiting'
 - c. Derived from 9th commandment
 - Which is not just 'lying'—but bearing false witness *against your neighbor*
2. NOR DOES EVIL TO HIS NEIGHBOR
 - a. 'Neighbor'—can mean 'friend' in Hebrew—**or**—simply 'another person'
 - b. Not necessarily one's own countryman—or neighborhood friend
 - c. Parable of Good Samaritan—the non-Jew was the 'good neighbor'
 - d. Basic idea—the 'upright' does good to all persons
3. 'TAKES UP A REPROACH'
 - a. Cast a slur—mud-slinging
 - Intent—to taunt, scorn, show contempt
 - b. Pick up something discreditable—raking it up unnecessarily—muckraking
 - Like a fertilizer spreader
 - Upright persons do not spread ill reports about neighbors, even if they are true—but prefer to keep silent and let the reports die out

C. VERSE 4—HIS ALLEGIANCE IS CLEAR AND CONSISTENT

4 *In whose eyes a reprobate is despised, but who honors those who fear the Lord; he swears to his own hurt and does not change*

1. IN WHOSE EYES A REPROBATE IS DESPISED
 - a. Wording

- Reprobate—**ma'ac** = despised—rejected
 - Despised—**bazah** = condemned—held in contempt—despised
- b. This is not Pharaical—not judgmental
1. Does not compare himself with others
 2. But states what he admires—shows where he stands
 - Does not cast his lot with the reprobate—the despised
 - Not with those who are opposite to those who fear the Lord (below)
- c. Simply sees the situation as it really is
- In his eyes—the ‘despised/reprobate’ [**ma'ac**] = those actually ‘despised’ [**bazah**]
- d. Note—some interpreters apply this description to the Psalmist himself
1. The Psalmist sees himself as a despised reprobate
 2. The Psalmist humbles himself before the Lord
 3. Examples:
 - David’s humiliating behavior—dancing before the Ark—**II Sam 6**
 - David’s self-admitted lowly nature—**Ps 131**
3. BUT WHO HONORS THOSE WHO FEAR THE LORD
- a. Honors—**kabad** = to glorify—make weighty/full of honor
 - b. Them that fear—**yare**—those who revere
4. SWEARS TO HIS OWN HURT AND DOES NOT CHANGE
- a. This is not about swearing and keeping oaths regarding human situations
 1. For example—Jephthah’s foolish vow—**Jgs 11**
 2. Remedies
 - Legally—a foolish vow is a sin—requires a sin offering—**Lev 5:4-6**
 - Morally—Solomon tells—how to extract yourself from a foolish pledge—**Pr 6:1-5**
 - b. But here—this means staying faithful to allegiance to the Lord
 - We follow Him regardless—even into harm’s way

D. VERSE 5a-b—HIS DEALINGS ARE HONORABLE

5 *He 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*

1. DOES NOT PUT OUT HIS MONEY AT INTEREST

- a. 'Interest' = 'usury'—**neshek**—derived from 'bite'
- b. Bible does not universally condemn money-lending for interest
 - **Dt 23:20**—forbid charging fellow Jews interest, but not foreigners
 - **Mt 25:27**—Parable of Talents—Jesus said the man with one talent he should have invested the money for interest
- c. The essential principle—do not capitalize on a brother's misfortune—do not extort
 - **Lev 25:35-38**
 - ◇ If your countryman becomes poor—do not take advantage of him
 - ◇ Do not charge him usurious interest
 - ◇ Do not charge him at a profit for food!
 - ◇ But sustain him—that he may live with you

2. DOES NOT MAKE A BRIBE AGAINST THE INNOCENT

- a. To accept payment for testifying falsely against an innocent person at a trial
 - See—**Ex 23:8** and **Dt 16:19; 27:25**
- b. Contrary conduct became widespread practice in later Israel
 - See —**Isa. 1:23; 5:23; Jer. 22:17; Ezek. 22:12; Hos. 4:18; Micah 3:11**

E. VERSE 5c—HIS PLACE IS SECURE

He who does these things will never be shaken

1. FALSE SECURITY

- a. Is claimed by ungodly
 - **Ps 10:6**—*He says to himself, I will not be moved, throughout all generations I will not be in adversity*
- b. The ungodly rejoice when the godly are shaken
 - **13:4**—*And my enemy will say, I have overcome him, and my adversaries will rejoice when I am shaken*

2. THE UPRIGHT ARE SECURE—[IN THEIR TRUST IN GOD]

- **16:8**—*Because His is at my right hand, I will not be shaken*
- **46:5**—*God is in the midst of her [the city of God], she will not be moved*

- **62:2, 6**—*He only is my rock and m salvation, my stronghold; I shall not be greatly shaken. . . . He only is my rock and my salvation, my stronghold; I shall not be shaken.*