

THE PSALMS IN HUMAN LIFE

PART 4

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PSALM 15

It is agreed in the commentaries that I have consulted on this *Psalm* that it was composed at the time of the removal of the Ark from Kirjathjearim, and the house of Abinadab.

1 Samuel 7 v 2 *“And it came to pass, while the ark abode in Kirjathjearim, that the time was long; for it was twenty years: and all the house of Israel lamented after the LORD.”*

2 Samuel 6 v 4 *“And they brought it out of the house of Abinadab which was at Gibeah, accompanying the ark of God”.*

A corresponding *Psalm* to this is **Psalm 24**, which we will speak about on another occasion.

You will notice that **Psalm 15** begins with a question in **verse 1**, and the remainder of the *Psalm* answers the question.

1 LORD, who shall abide in thy
tabernacle? who shall dwell in thy
holy hill?

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

3 He that backbiteth not with his
tongue, nor doeth evil to his
neighbour, nor taketh up a reproach
against his neighbour.

4 In whose eyes a vile person is
contemned; but he honoureth them
that fear the LORD. He that sweareth
to his own hurt, and changeth not.

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.

As this *Psalm* is read, it seems that one can almost hear the conversation that is taking place between the *Psalmist* and the person who is being addressed.

One of the things we need to address at the beginning of this *Psalm* is the difference between ‘**abide**’ and ‘**dwell**’ in **verse 1**. “LORD, *who shall abide in thy tabernacle? who shall dwell in thy holy hill?*”. We shall look here at the meaning of these two words as they are very important to having a clear understanding of the *Psalm*.

Adam Clark’s Commentary defines them as follows.

“The **TABERNACLE** was a temporary and frequently-removed building, carried about from place to place, and not long in any one place. Concerning this it is said: “Who shall lodge, or sojourn,” there? It is not a residence, or dwelling-place, but a place to lodge in for a time.

The **TEMPLE** was a fixed and permanent building, “Who shall dwell, abide”, or have his permanent residence, there?

The tabernacle being a migratory temple, carried about on the shoulders of the priests and Levites, there was no dwelling there for any; they could but lodge or sojourn.

The temple being fixed, the priests, Levites, became permanent occupiers. There was no lodging or sojourning, but permanent residence for all connected with it.

The tabernacle is, therefore, a proper type of the Church militant, wandering up and down, tossed by various storms and tempests; the followers of God, having here no continuing city; sojourning only on earth to get a preparation for eternal glory.

The temple is also a proper type or emblem of the Church triumphant in heaven. “Here the wicked cease from troubling, and the weary are at rest.” It is the dwelling-place the eternal residence, of all who are faithful unto death, who

are made pillars in that temple of God, to go no more out for ever". (end of quote)

One refers to a temporary place, the other a permanent dwelling.

Abide is to sojourn, dwell for a time, temporarily dwell.

Dwell is to settle down, abide, dwell, tabernacle, reside.

Tabernacle - Nomad's tent, and thus symbolic of wilderness life, transience.

Holy Hill - Mountains, hill country, mount. The Mount is a permanent fixture, it is not something you move from place to place like you do a tent or tabernacle.

The question that has to be addressed is a serious one, for it is referring to what type of lifestyle God approves of, and will that person then live having daily contact with the Lord regardless of where they are in the world? The ultimate is, that if their way of life meets with the approval of the Lord, it will be climaxed by the individual being given a permanent dwelling, for Jesus said in **John 14 verses 2 & 3** (my own paraphrase here) 'In my Father's house there are many dwellings and I go to prepare one of these for you'.

In addressing the question in **verse 1** we have to look at the answer given to the question and note the result. The remaining 4 verses outline for us the complete analysis of the question asked in verse 1.

There are three vital areas of human life affected when one becomes a Christian. These three areas are noticeable, because they all have to do with the way we live, behave and conduct ourselves. We will look at these three areas as they are stated for us in the *Psalms*.

I want us here to take a look at **verse 2**, which says "*He that walketh uprightly, and worketh righteousness, and speaketh the truth in his heart*". The N.I.V.

says *“He whose walk is blameless and who does what is righteous, who speaks the truth from his heart”*.

After giving consideration to the question in **verse 1**, I am not sure whether the *Psalmist* begins to answer it for himself, or if it is another person who has listened to the question, and then answers it for him. If it is David who answers it for himself, I would think that he did so after being promoted by the Spirit of the Lord.

Possibly he had looked at his own relationship with the Lord, and knew what pleased the Lord, and also what the Lord disapproved of. If this *Psalm* was written for the home coming of the Ark of God to Jerusalem, the past experience of failure in bringing it to Zion could have had a bearing on what he penned in **verses 2 to 5**. In attempting to bring the Ark of God to its dwelling place in Jerusalem, a grave error was made. David and those who were supporting him did not follow the correct procedure for its removal.

The Ark was known as ‘The Ark of His Presence’. David had attempted to get the presence of God to be where he was living but failed on this occasion. The lesson he learned was, that if you want to be where the presence of God is, and you desire the presence of God to be where you are, then it is necessary to comply with the conditions laid down in scripture, otherwise the ‘Dove of the Spirit’ that brings the presence of God will not rest upon you.

Let us now look at the three areas that are clearly outlined in **verse 2**, and consider them. We have to observe.

1. OUR WALK. *“He that walketh uprightly”*.

The word **‘walk’** in this verse figuratively speaking means ‘manner of life’. In linking this with the word **‘uprightly’** the picture we have is of someone whose manner of life is complete and entirely in accord with the truth of God’s word. To be a Christian we have to live in accord with God’s word and allow God’s word to have a direct bearing on the manner of our life. It is necessary to say

that you can have a theoretical knowledge of God's word without it influencing the manner of your life, so the application of the word is what must be called for, otherwise God's word is no different than any other book you read, which does not affect in any way the way you live.

Note here, some of the verses from the scripture that emphasise the importance of God's word to us.

Numbers 22 v 18 *And Balaam answered and said unto the servants of Balak, If Balak would give me his house full of silver and gold, I cannot go beyond the word of the LORD my God, to do less or more.*

Proverbs 30 v 5 *Every word of God is pure: he is a shield unto them that put their trust in him.*

Isaiah 40 v 8 *The grass withereth, the flower fadeth: but the word of our God shall stand for ever.*

Luke 8 v 21 *And he answered and said unto them, My mother and my brethren are these which hear the word of God, and do it.*

Hebrews 4 v 12 *For the word of God is quick, and powerful, and sharper than any twoedged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart.*

1 Peter 1 v 23 *Being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever.*

1 John 2 v 5 *But whoso keepeth his word, in him verily is the love of God perfected: hereby know we that we are in him.*

1 John 2 v 14 *I have written unto you, fathers, because ye have known him that is from the beginning. I have written unto you, young men, because ye are strong, and the word of God abideth in you, and ye have overcome the wicked one.*

The word of God shapes our manner of life; it performs its work like a craftsman's tool, which works on its subject until it has completed the task. The work of the craftsman goes ahead unhindered by the object he is working on until that subject has been totally conformed. Sometimes there are areas of our life that need attention. As Gods subjects we have to submit to the tool of His word, which will then work on us so that the manner of our life meets with His approval.

Further we need to observe from **verse 2**

2. OUR WORKS. *“And worketh righteousness”.*

Who is going to **dwel** and who is going to **abide**? The workers of righteousness, whose actions and activity show that they are righteous. A brief glance at the world situation at present will clearly identify individuals who are the workers of unrighteousness. Without naming them, they have been responsible for the atrocities, the poverty and the injustices being experienced by their people.

If it is possible to identify the workers of unrighteousness, then surely it is possible to point out what it is that makes the **workers of righteousness** stand out as being different.

Matthew Henry in his commentary says “He is one that is conscientiously honest and just in all his dealings, faithful and fair to all with whom he has to do”.

Adam Clark in his commentary says “He is not satisfied with a contemplative life; he has duties to perform. The law of righteousness has placed him in certain relations, and each of these relations has its peculiar duties. The words here used, signify to give just weight, to render to all their dues”.

I think we have all heard of what is known as the ‘weights and measures man’, who goes around the shops to test if the scales are rightly balanced, he ensures that people are given the right weight when they purchase something.

Our motives, our actions, in fact everything we do as Christians should have stamped on them ‘just and right’.

Micah 6 v 8 says “*He hath shewed thee, O man, what is good; and what doth the LORD require of thee, but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God?*” The N.I.V. says “*He has showed you, O man, what is good. And what does the LORD require of you? To act justly and to love mercy and to walk humbly with your God*”.

Righteousness has to do with doing what is right. Behaving right, working right, living right, and living within the framework of God’s moral law. The **righteousness** of God is one of those characteristics of the Lord, which can be communicated to us. There are some of God’s characteristics, which we can never have, because He has things which are part of His holy nature that can never be ours. We can never be God, who is total deity; but we can strive to be like God. We can be like Him in **righteousness**, but not omnipotent; we can be like Him in holiness, but not omniscient; we can be like Him in purity, but not omnipresent.

We must measure our **WALK** and **WORKS** by God’s word.

Finally we have.

3 OUR WORDS. “*who speaks the truth from his heart*”.

Matthew Henry in his commentary writes about matters we get involved in, with regard to the issues he touches on he says. “If any man, in this matter, bridles not his tongue, his religion is vain. He knows the worth of a good name, and therefore *he backbites not*, defames no man, speaks evil of no man, and makes not others’ faults the subject of his common talk”.

The following Scriptures relate to **WORDS**

Job 6 v 24 *“Teach me, and I will hold my tongue: and cause me to understand wherein I have erred”.*

Job 6 v 30 *“Is there iniquity in my tongue? cannot my taste discern perverse things?”*

Psalms 34 v 13 *“Keep thy tongue from evil, and thy lips from speaking guile.”*

Psalms 71 v 24 *“My tongue also shall talk of thy righteousness all the day long: for they are confounded, for they are brought unto shame, that seek my hurt”.*

James in his epistle has something to say about the tongue, he is quite definite that more damage is done to people by the tongue than any other member of the body.

James 3 v 5 *“Even so the tongue is a little member, and boasteth great things. Behold, how great a matter a little fire kindleth!”*

James 3 v 6 *“And the tongue is a fire, a world of iniquity: so is the tongue among our members, that it defileth the whole body, and setteth on fire the course of nature; and it is set on fire of hell”.*

James 3 v 8 *“But the tongue can no man tame; it is an unruly evil, full of deadly poison.”*

Family N.T. Notes says “As everlasting consequences depend upon the use of the tongue, all, and especially ministers of the gospel, should earnestly pray that they may always so speak as shall tend most to honour God and benefit their fellow-men”.

1 Peter 3 v 10 *“For he that will love life, and see good days, let him refrain his tongue from evil, and his lips that they speak no guile”*

In answering the question “*LORD, who shall abide in thy tabernacle? who shall dwell in thy holy hill?*” David writes of three areas that have a direct bearing upon this. Our **WALK**; Our **WORKS**, and Our **WORDS**. These three are covered by what David has to say in **verses 3 to 5**.