

“Who Shall Abide...?”

Psalm 15

In essence, the question being asked in verse one is one of position based on action. Who belongs with Jehovah? The one who lives his life in a way that demonstrates he truly loves the Lord and wants to please Him.

Years ago, Harry Emerson Fosdick, then at the height of his influence as minister of the Riverside Church, New York City, was making a tour of Palestine and other countries of the Near and Middle East. He was invited to give an address at the American University of Beirut, Lebanon, where the student body comprised citizens of many countries and representatives from sixteen different religions. What could one say that would be relevant or of interest to so mixed and varied a group? This is how Fosdick began: "I do not ask anyone here to change his religion; but I do ask all of you to face up to this question: What is your religion doing to your character?"

This was a call to consider one of the great issues of human belief: religion and life, Christianity and character, word and spirit. Emerson once said, "What you are speaks so loudly I cannot hear a word you say."

After stating what the unbeliever was like in Psalm 14, the one who assembled the book of Psalms in the order we have it was led by the Holy Spirit to insert this psalm next to show the stark contrast between the believer and unbeliever.

Verse one serves as an introduction with the questions, "Who shall abide in thy tabernacle? Who shall dwell in thy holy hill?" "Abide" and "dwell" point

to the same thing: position in relation to the Lord. "Tabernacle and hill together signify the earthly residence of God. It is a figure for intimate communion with Jehovah, and participation of His favour."—Alexander. Some say this question for the New Testament dispensation is speaking of the church, the body of Christ, and I think there is a good application to be made with that thought. What does it mean to belong to the church of God? The next four verses answer the question.

I. THOSE WHO DO RIGHT – VS. 2

A. "He that walketh uprightly"

1. The term "walketh" means the same in this text as it does in the New Testament as we saw in our study of the command, "Walk in the Spirit." The one who belongs close to the Lord is the one who is seen living their lives like a child of God.
2. "Uprightly" – blameless, complete – often used for the animal that was sacrificed to the Lord in the Old Testament that was to be "without blemish."

B. "He that...worketh righteousness"

1. "Worketh" – practices habitually
2. "Righteousness" – "He is the one that is conscientiously honest and just in all his dealings, faithful and fair to all with whom he has to do" (Henry).

C. "He that...speaketh the truth in his heart"

1. As we saw in our study of the phrase “in the heart” in the last psalm, what we are at our core being, in our heart, is what we are, or eventually will be, in our actions. As we saw in that psalm, the fool said “in his heart” that there is no God. In stark contrast to that, the upright man, the one abiding and dwelling in full fellowship with God, speaks the truth of God and His Word in his heart which is now regenerated by the Spirit of God.
2. If we “speak the truth in our heart,” we are going to speak it with our mouth. This is a principle found throughout the Bible and is a core character value of the believer that walks with God.

Zechariah 8:16–17

¹⁶ These are the things that ye shall do; Speak ye every man the truth to his neighbour; execute the judgment of truth and peace in your gates:

¹⁷ And let none of you imagine evil in your hearts against his neighbour; and love no false oath: for all these are things that I hate, saith the LORD.

Ephesians 4:25

²⁵ Wherefore putting away lying, speak every man truth with his neighbour: for we are members one of another.

II. THOSE WHO SPEAK RIGHT – VS. 3

A. ***“He that backbiteth not with his tongue”***

1. “Backbiteth” – this word has the sense of slander, something for which a child of

God should never be known. "A backbiter is one who privately, secretly, behind a man's back speaks evil of him, devours and destroys his credit and reputation" (Gill).

2. "With his tongue" – James speaks directly to this.

James 3:2–10

² For in many things we offend all. If any man offend not in word, the same is a perfect man, and able also to bridle the whole body.

³ Behold, we put bits in the horses' mouths, that they may obey us; and we turn about their whole body.

⁴ Behold also the ships, which though they be so great, and are driven of fierce winds, yet are they turned about with a very small helm, whithersoever the governor listeth.

⁵ Even so the tongue is a little member, and boasteth great things. Behold, how great a matter a little fire kindleth!

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.

⁷ For every kind of beasts, and of birds, and of serpents, and of things in the sea, is tamed, and hath been tamed of mankind:

⁸ But the tongue can no man tame; it is an unruly evil, full of deadly poison.

⁹ Therewith bless we God, even the Father; and therewith curse we men, which are made after the similitude of God.

¹⁰ Out of the same mouth proceedeth

blessing and cursing. My brethren, these things ought not so to be.

B. "Nor doeth evil to his neighbor"

1. Considering the context of the tongue in the previous statement and the context of hearing in the next statement, it would be safe to consider the "evil" mentioned here is not just evil done to a neighbor but "evil" spoken against a neighbor.
2. Our neighbor, both Old and New Testament, is anyone that we interact with, anyone we have dealings with of any kind.
3. The truly righteous that are near to God will not only not slander his neighbor but won't say or do anything that would cause injury to his neighbor, and I believe there is a principle of Scripture taught throughout that if this happens, there will be the desire to be reconciled with our neighbor or with our brother so that our walk with the Lord in uprightness is not affected.

Matthew 5:23-24

²³ Therefore if thou bring thy gift to the altar, and there rememberest that thy brother hath ought against thee;

²⁴ Leave there thy gift before the altar, and go thy way; first be reconciled to thy brother, and then come and offer thy gift.

Mark 11:25

²⁵ And when ye stand praying, forgive, if ye have ought against any: that your Father

also which is in heaven may forgive you your trespasses.

Mr. Moody tells about the time he and Mr. Sankey visited a town and for a week it seemed as if they were beating the air; there was no power in the meetings. One day, he said that perhaps there was someone cultivating the unforgiving spirit. The chairman of our committee, who was sitting next to them, got up and left the meeting right in view of the audience. He had had trouble with someone for about six months. He at once hunted up this man and asked him to forgive him. He came to me with tears in his eyes, and said: "I thank God you ever came here." That night the inquiry-room was thronged.

C. "Nor taketh up a reproach against his neighbor"

1. "Taketh up" – has the idea of receiving as true or giving credit to.
2. "A reproach" – the one walking in truth is going to be very hesitant to accept anything bad said of his neighbor. This isn't saying we are to believe everybody around us is good, but we should be careful to make sure what is said to us about someone else is correct, and it isn't being said just to cause trouble.

Proverbs 26:20-21

²⁰ Where no wood is, there the fire goeth out:
so where there is no talebearer, the strife

ceaseth.

²¹ As coals are to burning coals, and wood to fire; so is a contentious man to kindle strife.

III. THOSE WHO HONOR RIGHT – VS. 4

A. "In whose eyes a vile person is contemned"

1. "In whose eyes" – the eyes of the one who abides and dwells with God in fellowship.
2. "Vile person" – this is a person of bad character.
3. "Is contemned" – to hold in contempt or to despise.
4. The righteous will not consider giving honor or respect to a person of poor character regardless of wealth, position in society, relationship to others, etc.

B. "He honoureth them that fear the LORD"

In contrast, the righteous will honor, will respect and esteem of great value, those that fear the Lord, whether they are poor or destitute or different, etc.

C. "He that sweareth to his own hurt, and changeth not"

1. The one that lives as a child of God should, that will have that fellowship with Him that is needed, is one who is honorable in keeping his word, no matter what it costs him.

2. Too many who claim to be a child of God care very little about doing right or speaking right or honoring right. They care only for themselves and what and who is closest to them and will do or say whatever they need to to advance their position.

IV. THOSE WHO "STEWARD" RIGHT – VS. 5A

A. By that I mean that the one who belongs with the Lord demonstrates that position by how honorable and faithful they are as stewards of what God has given them, whether it is finances, possessions, or spiritual gifts.

B. "He that putteth not out his money for usury" – doesn't use his money to gain advantage over others.

C. "Nor taketh reward against the innocent" – doesn't take a bribe to cause someone else injury or to build himself up at the expense of someone less fortunate.

Conclusion: The last portion of verse five is the conclusion and points back to verse one. If we follow these simple truths, we will "never be moved." The word for "moved" is used twenty-four times in the book of Psalms. It's an important word relating to the child of God in face of conflict and enemies. "No storm shall tear him from his foundations, drag him from his anchorage, or uproot him from his place" (Spurgeon).

Not only here on earth will we be established and anchored if we are upright and holy, but we will be

eternally established and anchored, since our hope is on the Rock, Christ Jesus.

A father and his small son strolled down the street in Chicago past the place where a skyscraper was being constructed. Glancing up, they saw men at work on a high story of the building. "Father," said the little boy, "What are those little boys doing up there?" "Those are not little boys, son. They're grown men." "But why do they look so small?" "Because they're so high," his father answered. After a pause the boy asked, "Then, Father, when they get to heaven there won't be anything left of them, will there?" It's so true. The nearer we come to Christ the less others see of us and the more they see of Christ.