

Nation's Decline in Moral Conduct V

As noted in the four previous articles David asked the questions "Jehovah, who shall sojourn in thy tabernacle? Who shall dwell in thy holy hill?" (Psalm 15).

Our last article dealt with the second of David's negative characteristic as to what an individual should not have, i.e. "Nor doeth evil to his friend." At this time, we want to direct our attention to the third, i.e., he will not take "up a reproach against his neighbor."

The Law of Moses forbade tale-bearing of all kinds, saying, "Thou shalt not go up and down as a talebearer among thy people" (Leviticus 19:16). John Gill said, concerning a man's dealings with his neighbor, he will "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." Solomon describes the character of a man, who would take up a reproach against his neighbor, saying, "The words of a whisperer are as dainty morsels, And they go down into the innermost parts. Fervent lips and a wicked heart are like an earthen vessel overlaid with silver dross. He that hateth dissembleth with his lips; But he layeth up deceit within him: When he speaketh fair, believe him not; For there are seven abominations in his heart: Though his hatred cover itself with guile, his wickedness shall be openly showed before the assembly. Whoso diggeth a pit shall fall therein; And he that rolleth a stone, it shall return upon him. A lying tongue hateth those whom it hath wounded; And a flattering mouth worketh ruin. (Proverbs 26:22-28).

The word translated "reproach" in our text means "to strip, or make bare, to deprive one of his garments" (Illus: Winter strips the trees and fields of foliage and they appear disgraced and dishonored, [Clarke]). So, one reproached is stripped of his/her clothing of righteousness.

As you strive to be found in Jehovah's favor ask yourself the question, "Have I brought reproach against my neighbor?"

Each of us should be aware of the dangers of the tongue. Solomon said, "In the multitude of words there wanteth not transgression; But he that refraineth his lips doeth wisely. The tongue of the righteous is as choice silver: The heart of the wicked is little worth. The lips of the righteous

feed many; But the foolish die for lack of understanding” (Proverbs 10:19-21). ret