

Psalm 15

Introduction and Theme

Unsaved friend who refused to accept the Bible and God required that one must have Christ to be saved—he was convinced he would still go to heaved because he could debate God and convince Him He was wrong

1. Psalm 15 is what we would refer to as a wisdom psalm because its primary purpose appears to be that of instilling wisdom in its readers by reciting elements of the OT Law
2. Some believe this psalm may have been used as part of an entrance liturgy, something meditated on or sung by those traveling up to the temple to worship
3. Theme: Who can abide in the LORD's presence

A. Structure and Poetic Elements

1. Structure:
 - a. One option (which emphasizes the alternating positive/negative statements):
 - 1) Question (1)
 - 2) 10-part answer (2-5b)
 - 3) Concluding Promise (5c)
 - b. Another option (which favors the parts of speech; three participles in v. 2 followed by perfect/imperfect verb tenses that follow):
 - 1) Question (1)
 - 2) 3-part answer (2)
 - 3) Examples (3-5b)
 - 4) Concluding Promise (5c)
2. Poetic Elements:
 - a. Synonymous Parallelism (1)—repeating the same idea by using different words
 - b. Antithetic parallelism (4a-b)—using opposing phrases to make a point (e.g. “the heart of the wise inclines to the right, but the heart of the fool to the left”)
 - c. Alternating positive and negative statements:
 - 1) 3 positive (2)
 - 2) 3 negative (3)
 - 3) 2 positive (4)
 - 4) 2 negative (5)

B. Teaching

1. David begins with a question and it's essentially this: what kind of person can live in the presence of God (1): **“O LORD, who may abide in Your tent? Who may dwell on Your holy hill?”**---There are a number of important things to note in this question that need to be addressed:
 - a. The first thing to note is that **“tent”** and **“holy hill”** are synonyms for the presence of the God:

- 1) Tent is a reference to the temporary earthly dwelling place of the Lord, the Tabernacle, used by Israel from the Exodus until Solomon built the first permanent Temple
 - 2) Holy Hill is a reference to the Temple hill in Jerusalem which became the permanent home of the tabernacle after David moved it there
 - 3) These are synonyms representing the presence of the LORD
 - 4) By the way, did you notice the synonymous parallelism in this first verse?
- b. The second thing to note is that David’s question is rhetorical:
- 1) He already knows the answer because he’s going to share it with us in a moment
 - 2) However, he directs the question to the LORD because it is ultimately God who determines what is required to be in His presence, and He has revealed this in His Word (something David reflects upon in the upcoming verses)
 - 3) This is where so many miss the mark when they consider whether or not they are worthy to stand before God—they measure themselves by some man-made standard, rather than asking what God Himself requires
- Catholic priest telling me I didn’t need to be born again because I was Catholic
- c. The third thing to note is that while David’s immediate attention might be worship (e.g. who can enter the Tabernacle to worship God), the implications go beyond the earthly to the eternal:
- 1) The tense David uses here (imperfect) refers to an action that is incomplete, and in this context refers to something that is ongoing
 - 2) We see this reflected in another psalm (61) where David uses almost the exact same language but adds the word “forever” three times when referring to dwelling in the LORD’s tent and abiding with Him
 - 3) Likewise, in Psalm 16 David links living in the presence of the LORD to not being abandoned to Sheol (16:10-11)
 - 4) So, ultimately, David’s question of who can dwell in the presence of the LORD is an eternal or everlasting one
- d. The fourth and final thing to note with David’s question is that when he asks “**who**” can abide or live in the presence of the LORD, he is asking about character—in other words, what kind of a person can live forever in the LORD’s presence
2. David answers the question in v. 2 with three phrases (2):
- a. The first is “**He who walks with integrity**”
- 1) Most English translations render this as walking or living “**blamelessly**” which is a literal translation
 - 2) However, David is not talking about perfection but someone who is committed to living by God’s laws and standards, to keeping His Word:
 - a) David himself wasn’t perfect but he was called blameless (Psalm 18:32)
 - b) Job wasn’t perfect but was called blameless many times (Job 1:1, 3; 2:3)
 - c) They key? They strove to keep God’s Laws and did this according to the power supplied to them by God
- b. The second is “[**he who**] works righteousness”:
- 1) This describes someone who does the right thing morally

- 2) It refers to having ethical standards in line with God’s standards
 - 3) It also implies more than simply avoiding sin—it implies doing righteousness
- c. The third is “[**he who**] **speaks truth in his heart**”:
- 1) This describes the person who loves the truth
 - 2) It is something so imbedded in his heart that when he speaks it comes out of his mouth
- d. Notice that each of these three character traits—blamelessness, righteousness, and truth—are all attributes of God Himself
3. David provides examples of the three character traits above (3-5a)—in other words, these are the types of things that reveal the kind of character he just described:
- a. He “**does not slander with his tongue**” (3a).
 - 1) To slander is to say something about someone else that is untrue
 - 2) This can be malicious (known to be untrue) or gossip (repeating what one has heard without knowing the truth)
 - 3) Today, this would include things like social media, texting, email, , etc.
 - b. He does not do “**evil to his neighbor**” (3b): there can be two sides to this:
 - 1) Deliberately doing something to harm someone else
 - 2) Inadvertently harming someone and then not making it right
 - 3) The emphasis in this phrase might be primarily harming someone with your words because of the phrases that immediately precede and follow it (slander and reproach)
 - c. He doesn’t “**take up reproach against his friend**” (3c)
 - 1) To reproach means to shame, taunt, rebuke
 - 2) CSB: “**discredit his neighbor**”
 - 3) NIV: “**cast no slur on his fellow man**”
 - 4) NET: “**insult his neighbor**”
 - d. He “**despises**” the “**reprobate**”, but “**honors those who fear the LORD**” (4a).—notice the antithetical parallelism
 - 1) A more literal translation would be “**he despises the one who’s been rejected**”—meaning that he despises those the LORD despises and has rejected
 - 2) And, he honors those who fear and respect the LORD
 - e. He keeps his word, even if it costs him something (4c): “**He swears to his own hurt and does not change**”
 - 1) NIV: “**who keeps his oath even when it hurts**”
 - 2) CSB: “**who keeps his word whatever the cost**”
 - 3) NET: “**He makes firm commitments and does not renege on his promise**”
 - f. He doesn’t take advantage of those who are in need (5c): “**He does not put out his money at interest**”
 - 1) Israelites were forbidden to charge interest when lending to other Israelites (Ex 22:25; Lev 25:36)
 - 2) The Hebrew word for interest comes from the word “to bite”!!!).

Learning from Ben to give rather than lend

- g. He doesn't pervert justice (5b): **"Nor does he take a bribe against the innocent"**

C. David ends with a promise (5c): **"He who does these things will never be shaken."**

1. To not be shaken is a figure of speech representing dependability and security
2. David uses it elsewhere when referring to the LORD (Psalm 62:2, 6; 112:6; 16:8; 21:7)

D. Conclusion

1. One of the things I love about this psalm is that it was written by David, an imperfect man:
 - a. He wasn't always blameless
 - b. He didn't always act righteously
 - c. He didn't always speak truth
 - d. In fact, he had multiple occasions where he failed in these areas (e.g. when he almost killed out of revenge, adultery with Bathsheba, numbering the people, etc.)
 - e. Yet, God referred to David as a man after His own heart because he sought to have the kind of character he describes here, and when he failed he felt remorse, confessed and repented of his sin
2. David didn't write this psalm as a checklist of do's and don'ts that would somehow earn or secure God's favor; And, we would be remiss if we treated it that way
3. Rather, we see in this psalm an impossibility if we tried to be the kind of person David describes all on our own—if we could, we wouldn't need Jesus or the Holy Spirit:
 - a. We cannot be blameless in and of ourselves, but we are blameless in Jesus Christ because He is blameless: Ephesians 1:4
 - b. We are not righteous in and of ourselves, but we are righteous in Jesus Christ because He is righteous: 2 Corinthians 5:21
 - c. We do not have truth in and of ourselves, but we have THE TRUTH in Jesus Christ : Ephesians 4:20-32
 - d. When we have Jesus Christ we have all these things which is why we can live in the presence of God: James 4:7-10