



Psalm 15 - The Roadmap for Righteous Living

Last Wednesday night we looked at Psalm 3. David reminds us in that Psalm that God is our shield, our glory, and the lifter of our heads. We fleshed out the beautiful reality of God acting as our shield and our wonderful protector. We were reminded that we need protection from all kinds of things. We are in a

spiritual war. The battle for our mind comes not only from outside of us, but also from within. Inside each of us rests an old sin nature that was born in sin, and unfortunately it will remain with us until our death. It is selfish and it is carnal.

But you, O Lord,
are a shield for me,
My glory, and
the One
who lifts up my head.
Psalm 3:3

As we studied that psalm, we were reminded that our flesh is at war with the spirit and the things of God. Mercifully, the Holy Spirit of God is also in us and empowers us to live a life of victory. When we are attacked from without and within, if we call on the name of the Lord, He shields us, wrapping us up in His arms, and protecting us from ourselves and others.

We then looked at the meaning of the phrase "He is my glory." Glory in Hebrew is **kavod**, which means heavy, solid, substantial, massive, wealthy, and a host of other ideas of great weight. I think a good way to look at this is to think of everything that is the opposite of a flake. A flake has no substance and no importance. David is saying that God is THE solid thing, a rock, upon whom we can build our lives. He is solid and unmoving and He *must* be the center and foundation that is most important to us. This reminded us of the old hymn sung by our mothers and grandmothers "rock of ages cleft for me." With even the faintest cry to God, we can hide our frail human selves in the cleft of that safety, the Rock of Ages. When we read "glory" in these passages, it helps to substitute the word "rock" or the idea of a "firm foundation."

The last metaphor we looked at was "He is the lifter of my head." When we are downcast, despondent, and depressed it is He who lifts us up and brings us out of the horrible pit (Psalm 40:2). One person in our congregation describes that path to misery as "going down that rabbit hole." David is saying that the Lord is the One who can pull us out of the hold of despondency when we end up there. I see the picture of a loving father who puts his tender hand under the chin of a crying child, and lifts his or her head gently, and tells the child that they are loved, adored, and cared for.

Summary of Psalms 4 - 14

Psalms 4-14 are a mixture of prayers, laments, and heartfelt sentiments. **Psalm 4** describes the safety of the faithful. *"⁴But know that the LORD has set apart for Himself him who is godly; The LORD will hear when I call to Him."* (NKJV). **Psalm 5** speaks of the beauty of God's guidance in each of our lives. In verses 1-3 we read, *"¹Give ear to my words, O LORD, Consider my meditation. ²Give heed to the voice of my cry, My King and my God, For to You I will pray. ³My voice You shall hear in the morning, O LORD; In the morning I will direct it to You, And I will look up."* (NKJV). If this doesn't make you long to get up in the early morning and kneel before the King of all Kings, I'm not sure what will motivate you to do so.

Psalm 6 is a prayer of faith in time of distress. **Psalm 7** includes both prayers and praise for deliverance from enemies. **Psalm 8** proclaims the glory of God in creation. *"¹Oh Lord our Lord how majestic is your name in all the earth!"* (ESV). **Psalm 9** includes prayers and thanksgiving for God's righteous judgments. **Psalm 10** is a song of confidence in God's promises to triumph over evil. In **Psalm 11**, David again rejoices over a righteous God who delights in the man or woman who pursues righteousness. *"⁷For the LORD is righteous, He loves righteousness; His countenance beholds the upright."* (NKJV).

Psalm 12 speaks of the treacherous ways of man contrasted with the wonderful constancy of God. People will fail you, but God will never fail you. In **Psalm 13** David calls for the believer to trust in the salvation of the Lord. *"⁵But I have trusted in Your mercy; My heart shall rejoice in Your salvation. ⁶I will sing to the LORD because He has dealt bountifully with me."* (NKJV). And then in **Psalm 14** David declares the folly of the godless. *"^{1a}The fool has said in his heart, there is no God."* Only a fool could look at creation and not see evidence of a great and magnificent divine architect!

We may go back and look at some of these in detail, but this morning I want to rest on **Psalm 15**. In Psalm 15 we are given a roadmap for righteous living. This Psalm qualifies the character of those who desire to "dwell with the Lord." Think of dwelling as "abiding." Remember when Jesus told His disciples: *"⁴Abide in Me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, unless it abides in the vine, neither can you, unless you abide in Me."* (John 15:4, NKJV). You may ask yourself, "How can I truly abide in/and dwell in God's presence?" Well, this psalm gives some spiritual insight into the character of those who have such an intimate relationship with God.

PSALM 15

The Character of Those Who May Dwell with the LORD

A Psalm of David.

- ¹ LORD, who may abide in Your tabernacle?
Who may dwell in Your holy hill?
- ² He who walks uprightly,
And works righteousness,
And speaks the truth in his heart;
- ³ He *who* does not backbite with his tongue,

- Nor does evil to his neighbor,
 Nor does he take up a reproach against his friend;
⁴ In whose eyes a vile person is despised,
 But he honors those who fear the LORD;
 He *who* swears to his own hurt and does not change;
⁵ He *who* does not put out his money at usury,
 Nor does he take a bribe against the innocent.
 He who does these *things* shall never be moved.¹

I. Question: The worshipers ask who may enter into the presence of the LORD and fellowship with him (v. 1).

II. Answer: The Levitical gate-keeper delineates the righteous characteristics of those who may abide in the LORD's presence (vv. 2–5).

A. He describes those who are acceptable to God (vv. 2–5a).

1. Their personal conduct is blameless (v. 2a).
2. Their whole life is characterized by doing righteous acts (v. 2b).
3. They speak the truth sincerely (v. 2c).
4. They do not slander (v. 3a).
5. They do not cause others pain (v. 3b).
6. They do not bring reproach on others (v.3c).
7. They distinguish between vile people and righteous people (v. 4a).
8. They hold to the sanctity of the oath (v. 4b).
9. They do not lend their money with interest (v. 5a).
10. They cannot be bribed (v. 5b).

B. He concludes that the worshiper who does all of this will be secure in the presence of the LORD (v. 5c).²

Verse 1 - David asks the question, "Lord, who can dwell in your tent, and who can dwell in your holy mountain?" He's wanting to know just what kind of person it is that can get close, really close to God. The mention of the tabernacle and the holy hill are metaphors. David's wanting to know how we can walk into the very heart of God. The psalm lists ten characteristics of the one who would be permitted to enter the sanctuary and fellowship with the LORD. There were no doubt other characteristics of qualified worshipers, but this list may have been chosen to parallel the Ten Commandments, the standard of righteousness.³ He gives a list of those characteristics of the man or woman who can get there:

¹ [*The New King James Version*](#). (1982). (Ps 15). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

² Ross, A. P. (2011–2013). [*A Commentary on the Psalms 1–89: Commentary*](#) (Vol. 1, p. 387). Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel Academic.

³ Ross, A. P. (2011–2013). [*A Commentary on the Psalms 1–89: Commentary*](#) (Vol. 1, p. 386). Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel Academic.

1. **Their personal conduct is blameless.** The person who lives “blamelessly” (תָּמִיּוֹם) is in a nutshell the person who has integrity. We know we can't be perfect, but Jesus tells us to strive for perfection. *"Be perfect as your heavenly Father is perfect."* (Matthew 5:48, NIV). People of integrity are the same regardless of where they are or who they are with. They are complete. There is unity in their being. Many of you have walked beside me or worked beside me, and you know I am the same person whether I am in this pulpit or in your living room. I don't speak one way in here and speak another way elsewhere. God loves integrity, and the person who wants to dwell in the place of the most high God must be a person who is the same regardless of where they are. They are not two-faced or differentiated. God looks for the genuine.

2. **Their life is characterized by righteous acts.** Revelation 19:8 declares that believers are supposed to be living a life in which they adorn themselves with righteous acts. The Hebrew word used here for “righteousness” (צִדִּיק) refers to what is morally and ethically right according to the standard of God. This line is saying that the person acceptable to God is the one who conforms their life to God's standard. They are studying God's word, applying it to their life, and conforming it to God's word.

3. **The person must speak the truth sincerely** if they are to meet Him in His holy hill. Truth-telling is ABSOLUTELY ESSENTIAL to the integrity that God desires in the heart of every believer. The Hebrew word "truth" **emet** (אֱמֶת) speaks of what is "reliable" and what is "dependable." Is your word such that it is reliable? In other words, is your word filled with truth or is it just gossip. Integrity in the speech of a believer means we do not engage in half-truths and hidden agendas. We are told in scripture, ³⁷ *"But let your 'Yes' be 'Yes,' and your 'No,' 'No.' For whatever is more than these is from the evil one."* (Matthew 5:37, NKJV). We are not to speak in innuendos and in shades of truth. We are to speak the truth, and we are commanded to do so in love (Ephesians 4:15).

4. **They are to not speak slander** if desiring to be in His "tabernacle." In law, slander is defined as "spoken defamation." So, what does that mean? The Hebrew text here says: “does not foot (לֹא-רָגַל) on his tongue.” I'm not exactly sure what that means, but it sounds an awful lot like "putting your foot in your mouth." Stop saying stuff you just shouldn't be saying. The heart of this is that to be the kind of person that dwells in God's presence, we need to be the kind of people that know how to shut up and not go around spreading untrue or unverified negative information about another. A person who slanders or gossips is being a person that goes around murdering others with words. Stop doing it.

5. **They do not cause pain to others.** We are to be the kind of people that "do not do evil to a friend." Evil here is (רָעָה) and we are admonished to not cause pain to anyone. When I bring pain on others, it gives me great anguish. Sometimes we do have to help a friend by offering painful criticism (Proverbs 27:6), but this verse (v. 3) doesn't refer to anything like that which has a godly purpose and end. The righteous person ALWAYS has the good of his brother, sister, or neighbor in mind. And remember, your "neighbor" is anyone you come into contact with (see the Good Samaritan Luke 10:25-37).

6. **They must not bring reproach (blame) to others.** A reproach refers to sharp criticism or personal attacks on others. We shouldn't be involved in scorning others or making sport of them. We should be all about promoting one another to be the very best versions we can be of ourselves. James, the brother of Jesus, warned us about our powerful tongues and how damaging they can be (James 3:9-11).

7. **They must be able to distinguish between vile people and righteous people.** This means that we need to have good discernment. We should be careful to honor and respect the God-fearing among us. We have to look beyond who is the popular one in the crowd and look to the one who is righteous. I think God is telling us to not follow people of the world, but rather the people of God. When we're able to figure out who is righteous it helps us to see who is working in concert with God instead of against Him. This is part of our drawing close to Him.

8. **They must hold to the sanctity of an oath.** The righteous may swear but will not go back on their oath even if it is painful (נִשְׁבַּע לְהָרַע, "he swears to [his own] pain"; for נִשְׁבַּע see Psalm 63:11). Here the psalmist is dealing with faithfulness, keeping one's word, even if it proves costly or inconvenient. The woman or man of God keeps their word and their promises. They do what they say they will do. The righteous must not change their mind to avoid an unexpected painful outcome; they must keep their word even if it means they suffer loss of some kind.⁴

9. **They must not lend their money with interest.** I think a way to look at this in today's context is to be careful when we help others to not look for something back. The righteous person doesn't keep much of a "tally sheet," and doesn't live a "tit for tat" sort of existence. We don't help others looking for a "payback" of some kind. Those we help should thank us and be appreciative, but we should never lord over them expecting to be reimbursed in some way.

10. **They must not take a bribe.** This means that a righteous person doesn't do something for gain when it hurts another. No such person is welcomed into God's fellowship or presence. Sins like this are despised by God and such evil-doers have no place in his sweet presence. Both Malachi and James warn about this kind of attitude, especially as it relates to showing favoritism to people, especially the wealthy (Malachi 2:11; James 2:1-10). In a nutshell, don't take advantage of others for your own gain.

Let us pray.

Union Grove is one of the oldest Baptist communities of faith in the State of Texas dating back to 1844. Pastor Faber McMullen may be reached by email at uniongrove362@gmail.com or by snail mail at: 15301 FM 362, Navasota, Texas 77868. Tel: 936-825-1227 (Edited and proofed by Amanda Neese- Webster, Texas.) All financial gifts to this ministry are tax-deductible as a 501 (c) (3) Corporation.

⁴ Allen Ross' Commentary on the Psalms