

# Dwelling with God

## Psalm 15

How are we to live in the house of God? We see in this psalm the efficacious grace of our God that not only brings us into His tabernacle but transforms us within it. He brings us into His presence and transforms us to live in covenant union with the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

### Summary of the Text

Psalm 15 begins with a question (v. 1), develops the answer in the bulk of the text (vv. 2-5), and then concludes with a promise (v. 5). Who can sojourn in the tabernacle and dwell in God's holy hill (v. 1)? He answers first in a general way: the one who walks uprightly, does righteousness, and speaks the truth in his heart (v. 2). And then specifically: he doesn't backbite with his tongue, do evil, or receive a reproach against his friend (v. 3). He doesn't produce or import slander. His loyalty to God is seen also in his response to people, despising the vile but honoring those who fear the Lord (v. 4). His oath binds him even when it costs him to keep it (v. 4). He doesn't lend money at interest to the poor and takes no bribe against the innocent (v. 5). Living for and with the Lord this way establishes him such that he will never be moved (v. 5).

### The Question

The question David asks can throw modern Christians for a loop. Who can dwell in God's holy hill? "Nobody!", we answer, end of psalm. We have such a Marcionite view of Scripture that divorces the God of the Old Testament from God of the New Testament that we miss God's desire to dwell among His people: "I will set My tabernacle among you, and My soul shall not abhor you. I will walk among you and be your God, and you shall be My people" (Lev. 26:11-12). God is one, and this has been our desire since being expelled from Eden. His covenant of grace begins with the promise to Eve and Adam (Gen. 3:15) and then unfolds over the course of Scripture to reveal more and more of His mercy until it reaches its fullness in Jesus: "For all the promises in Him are Yes, and in Him Amen, to the glory of God through us" (2 Cor 1:20). God established His presence in the midst of His people, assembling the Levites and then the tribes around the tabernacle, three on each side (Num. 1:53, 2:1ff.). When David moved the ark of the covenant from Abinadab's house to Jerusalem, the oxen stumbled and Uzzah grabbed it, causing the Lord to strike him dead (2 Sam. 6:6-7). Uzzah was not a Levite and never should have been near the ark, but this discouraged David and so he parked it at Obed-Edom the Gittite's (!) house for three months where it blessed him mightily (2 Sam. 6:10-12). David finally brought it up to Jerusalem with sacrifices, trumpets, shouting, and dancing and put it in a tent he made for it on Mount Zion. He sent everyone off with party favors of bread, meat, and cake to continue celebrating at home, except for Michal who complained about his lack of decorum (2 Sam. 6:13-23). David meditated on who can dwell with God and the Lord taught him through these events. Musical worship developed at Zion and transformed the worship and festival life of Israel.

### The Upright

David sketches the upright (*tamim*) man generally (v.1), the one who is not perfect or sinless, but blameless (cf. Gen. 6:9, 17:1). This means he walks consistently with God, faithfully thinking, speaking, and living while trusting in His mercy and living by His grace (cf. 1 Jn. 1:7-9). He doesn't checkoff boxes of superficial religiosity but "does righteousness and speaks the truth in his heart" (v. 2). The fool in Psalm 14 hid his

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hypocrisy in his heart, saying there is no God. But the upright speaks truth inside and out, having integrity all the way down. David describes particulars:

1. He doesn't backbite (*ragal*), speaking disparagingly about someone not present, going on about negative things that are none of his business (v. 3; cf. Prov. 18:8).
2. He doesn't do evil to his neighbor nor receive a reproach against his friend (v. 3). He cares about those God has placed around him, even if they aren't friends, so he guards his neighbor's stuff and his reputation (Deut. 22:1-4; Prov. 22:1). One of the reasons a whisperer separates friends (Prov. 16:28) is because one of them believes him. When you are called to make a judgement, it's critical to hear both sides (Prov. 18:17), but it's also important to openly reject lies and liars rather than split the difference. The upright knows his friend's character and will not sit idly by when he is reproached.
3. He despises the vile (v. 4). This violates the eleventh commandment, "Thou shalt be nice", which is no biblical command at all. We are to be kind and tenderhearted, forgiving one another as God in Christ forgave us (Eph. 4:32). We are to love our enemies, but this isn't incompatible with despising the vile. You love your enemy by treating him lawfully, but you must regard the vile the way God does (Ps. 139:21). Jesus shows us how this is done when He both loves the Pharisees, calling them to repentance, and yet publicly shames them for evildoing (Matt. 23).
4. The upright honors those who fear the Lord (v. 4). Loving the Lord leads you to honor those who also do: "As for the saints who are on the earth, 'They are the excellent ones, in whom is all my delight'" (Ps 16:3).
5. He swears to his own hurt, making good on what he said he would do even when it costs him (v. 4). He cares more about his word than his wallet.
6. He won't use his own money to fleece the poor (v. 5). Usury is lending with interest to someone who is destitute. The poor have no choice but to borrow for basic necessities, and charging interest violates the law of God (Ex. 22:25; Lev. 25:35-37; Neh. 5:1-7; Ez. 18:12-13).
7. He will not take others' money to do injustice (v. 5). He can't be bought because he loves God more than mammon. Rulers must hate covetousness (Ex. 18:21) because bribes ruin a nation.

### The True Tabernacle

Spurgeon said, "In perfection this holiness is only found only in the man of sorrows, but in a measure it is wrought in all His people by the Holy Ghost." The second person of the Trinity took on flesh and "tabernacled" among us (Jn. 1:14) so that He could bring us not into a temple on earth, but into God's dwelling in heaven (Heb. 9:24). This is where you are now, ascended with the upright man, Jesus, who has brought you into the Father's house. And what is He doing? Blessing, shaping, teaching, molding you to be completely unmovable (v. 5): "Therefore, my beloved brethren, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that your labor is not in vain in the Lord" (1 Cor. 15:58).