

• *Psalms 15-19 focus on answers to problems*

• *Fellowship with God is possible but not automatic*

Psalm 15 deals with maintaining fellowship with God. Many of these early psalms have to do with the struggles and conflicts that David passed through as the king of Israel. Some of the psalms give answers! Psalms 9-14 focuses on problems; Psalms 15-19 focus on answers. What is the first great need of men and women in this world with all of its conflicts? The answer is: fellowship with God! But who may have fellowship with God? This is the theme of Psalm 15. The question is: amongst these many struggles and problems that have been described in Psalms 1-14, is it possible to have fellowship with God? The answer is yes! But such fellowship is not automatic. Only certain people qualify for it. Our psalm begins with a question:

The question

¹*Yahweh, who will dwell in your tent?
Who shall inhabit your holy hill?*

• *The tabernacle*

The tabernacle was always a place of symbolic fellowship. The tabernacle is a symbol of fellowship with God. In David's time there was some kind of tabernacle, although the tabernacle at Shiloh no longer existed (see Joshua 18:1 – The whole congregation ... assembled at Shiloh and set up the tent of meeting there). The temple was built by David's son. But there was some kind of tabernacle in David's time.

• *Jerusalem*

Similarly Jerusalem was known as a place where God revealed himself. So the psalm's question means: who can have fellowship with God? Who will experience the glorious presence of God in his or her life?

The answer in outline

Verse 2 begins to answer the question. It is a description of the godly person. First there is a basic threefold description.

²*The person who walks blamelessly and does righteousness,
the person who speaks truth in his heart.*

• *Blameless – no serious blemishes*

The godly man and woman has an all-round godliness. He is not 100% sinless before God - no one is. But he has no serious blemishes which others can easily criticize. He practises what he knows God approves of. He is sincere and honest at heart. 'Blamelessness' is having every area of one's life basically right. It is not perfection but it the condition of being mature in every area of life.

• *Righteous behaviour*

This person actually does righteousness. His faith is not simply a theory; it is more than religiosity.

• *Truthful talk*

This person is able to use his tongue rightly. His heart is right (contrast Psalm 14); his talk is right.

More details

Verses 3-5b pick up this theme and gets down to details. Such a person controls his tongue, avoids malice and ill treatment of others, and maintains good attitudes towards those who are near to him.

• *Actions and attitudes towards others*

³*The person who has no slander on his tongue,
and who does no evil to his neighbour,
nor takes up any scornful attitudes against those
who are nearby.*

He is careful about the company he keeps

• *Careful about the company he keeps*

^{4a}*The person in whose eyes a vile person is despised,
but who honours those who fear the Lord.*

We are all very affected by the company we keep. The people we make our friends will have an effect upon us. We shall start using their language and adopting their ways of living. This is why the *fellowship* of

the Christians is important. Human life tends to become *communal* life. No one lives completely to himself - even if he tries.

• *Makes good assessments of other people*

Verse 4a means that we makes good assessments of other people. We avoid being damaged spiritually by 'a vile person'. We assess such a person for what he is. Paul said in 1 Corinthians 15:33 '*Do not be deceived: "Bad company ruins good morals".*'

• *True to his word*

The godly man or woman who God honours with fellowship is true to his word.

^{4b}*He swears to his own hurt and does not change his mind.*

Very often we promise something but then later it turns out to be inconvenient and we break our word. The godly man does not do this. Promises that are sinful we may withdraw (remember Herod's promise in Mark 6:23 - "*Whatever you ask me, I will give you, up to half of my kingdom*"). You don't keep a promise to sin! But on the other hand our word must be reliable. People need to be able to trust that what we shall say, we shall do.

• *Does not gain money through exploitation*

The godly person uses money with compassion, not exploiting others..

^{5a,b}*He does not put out his money at interest and does not take a bribe against the innocent.*

The Bible never makes much of a fuss about whether we are rich or not. It tells us to be contented. Philippians 4:11 – I have learned in whatever situation I am to be content. 1 Timothy 6:8 – But if we have food and clothing, with these we will be content. Hebrews 13:5 – Keep your life free from love of money, and be content with what you have, for he has said, "I will never leave you nor forsake you."

There are two things, however, that are important about money: how we get it and how we use it. The believer is told not to go after money in a way that exploits other people. The Israelites were forbidden to lend money in order to charge interest and make more money. They were forbidden to ill-treat the poor and squeeze more money out of him by exploiting his need. In a country where the Christian gospel is powerful the gap between the rich and the poor is not so great.

Final promise

Verse 5c gives a final promise:

^{5c}*The person who does these things shall never be moved.*

• *Blessing and stability in God's presence*

If we live this way, we shall enjoy fellowship with God. We shall 'dwell in God's tent'. We shall live in his holy hill. Because we have God's presence in our lives there will be an atmosphere of blessing in all that we do. Troubles will not cause us too much difficulty because we shall have the presence of God. Anyone who enjoys the presence of God will achieve much for God, and will stand strong in times of trouble.

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