

Heaven Bound

תהלים טו

Psalm 15

1 A Psalm of David.

LORD, who shall abide in thy tabernacle? who shall dwell in thy holy hill?

2 He that walketh uprightly, and worketh righteousness, and speaketh the truth in his heart.

3 *He that* backbiteth not with his tongue, nor doeth evil to his neighbour, nor taketh up a reproach against his neighbour.

4 In whose eyes a vile person is contemned; but he honoureth them that fear the LORD. *He that* sweareth to *his own* hurt, and changeth not.

5 *He that* putteth not out his money to usury, nor taketh reward against the innocent. He that doeth these *things* shall never be moved.

1 מְזֹמֹר לְדָוִד
to David Melodying

יְהוָה מִי־יִגוֹר בְּאַהֲלֶיךָ
in your (tent; tabernacle) (abide; sojourn;—who stranger) Yahweh
מִי־יִשְׁכֵן בְּהַר קֹדְשֶׁךָ:
your holy. in mount will dwell—Who

2 הוֹלֵךְ תָּמִים וּפְעֵל צְדָק
righteousness and (works; does; makes) (complete; whole; hav- ing integrity; innocent) He who (goes; walks; comes)
וְדֹבֵר אֱמֶת בְּלִבָּבוֹ:
in his heart. (truth; faithfulness) and speaks

3 לֹא־רָגַל עַל־לְשׁוֹנוֹ
to his tongue – upon foot – Not

לֹא־עָשָׂה לְרֵעֵהוּ רָעָה
(evil; bad) to his neighbor (does;— Not makes)

וְחָרְפָה לֹא־נִשְׂאָ עַל־קְרָבוֹ:
near him.— upon (carry; take) – not and (reproach; scorn)

4 נִבְזָה בְּעֵינָיו נִמְאַס
(reject; despise; refuse) in his eyes To be (despised; vile; worthless)

וְאֶת־יְרָאֵי יְהוָה יְכַבֵּד
to be honored Yahweh fear— and (untranslatable- denotes proper, distinct item)

נִשְׁבַּע לְהַרְעוֹ וְלֹא יִמָּר:
change. and not to his evil that will swear

5 כֶּסֶף לֹא־נָתַן בְּנִשְׁבָּה
in (interest; usury) give – not His silver

וְשֹׁחַד עַל־נַפְשׁוֹ לֹא־לָקַח
take – not innocent—upon and (gift; bribe; reward, present)

עֲשֵׂה אֵלֶּה לֹא יִמוּט לְעוֹלָם:
to forever. to (totter, not shake) these does

This psalm is short, but critical to come to grips with. It deals with our salvation. Where will we spend eternity? It is not addressing a salvation by works. It is definitely telling us the person who is heaven-bound is of the described character. Now it may be someone like the dying thief, next to the Lord Jesus Christ, who repented and turned to the Messiah moments before death. He was a changed man, and if he had been taken from the cross and recuperated, would have gone on in his life a changed man (Luke 23:39-43; Acts 3:26). This psalm shows us it is folly to think we can live like the devil, die in that wickedness, and be found in the Kingdom of God. The person heaven-bound is character changed.

An unusual point I wanted to note is the number of this psalm. If you look at the Hebrew number on the front of this article, you will notice two letters on their own in the name. Those letters are the number of the psalm. In Hebrew, they use letters as numbers. The Hebrew for 15 is our 9 and 6. This totals 15 (for those poor in math). Actually, the number would properly be read as the letters for 10 and 5. The reason they don't use that combination is because that also happens to be the name of Yahweh in its short form of Yah. They preserve the sacred use of that holy name as solely for God. The fact does remain though, that 15 is the value of Yah. When you consider the content of this psalm, I suspect it is more than coincidence the 15th psalm happens to be about God and the holiness that is required in His presence.

This psalm mentions the name of Yahweh twice, but never the term for "God". That would be due to the personal nature of this psalm. This is covering the knowing of God in a personal way, not some distant, foreign deity.

(For further study check out Ezekiel 18:5-9; 22:6-12,26-29 and Psalm 24. Psalm 24 is also significant in its placement, but that is another story.)

Lets start with a brief explanation of the lead-in copy:

1a A Psalm of David.

They translated this "Psalm", but the word used indicates playing a melody. Since English does not have a noun for such, I used a made-up word, on my interlinear, to express that.

The Hebrew word I translated as "to" could be taken as the indication that this psalm is attributed to David as the composer.

(Please remember: In following a Hebrew interlinear, Hebrew reads from right to left. I have placed the meanings of the words directly below each, so you

will read in "packets" backwards.)

1b LORD, who shall abide in thy tabernacle? who shall dwell in thy holy hill?

This first verse poses a question in Hebrew parallel poetry. Rephrased, we might ask the question, "Who will be found in heaven? Who will get to live with God?"

The day I started writing this message I found a tract laying in the middle of my driveway. It is entitled, "*How to Know You Are Going to Heaven*". I flipped it over to see who published it and found it to be by a publisher whose literature I have read in the past. They were very conservative, old-line Baptist. It was published in 1977. I figured it would probably be good, being older. I was sadly disgusted with what I read. The answers it gave, to its supposed purpose, could very easily have left an unrepentant sinner in a false security of salvation. *Repentance was not even mentioned!* Only containing a half-truth is actually to be a lie. I will quote from its grand summary of the issue, "*To believe on the Lord Jesus Christ means that you accept the facts that you are a sinner, that as a sinner you own the sin penalty, and that Jesus Christ died on the cross to pay the debt you owe. But it means going one step further. It means that you will completely trust Christ to get you to Heaven — that you will put the matter of your salvation in His hands and depend on Him for everlasting life.*"

Now the moment you do this, God promises you are not condemned but have everlasting life and that you shall never perish."

This sounds pretty good for fire insurance to the unrepentant, self-confessed sinner. What's more, he who believes that tract will be hardened against the truth down the road. He will ignore a call to repentance since he has believed that once he has said the "prayer", he is once and for all saved.

Psalm 15 poses in a question, what that tract claimed to answer. The answer this psalm gives is entirely different. Let me point out, "It's a lie to say a person was saved by works in the Old Testament. That's all history now Christ has come." They were saved by God's "rachim" (tender loving mercies) to those who "fear Him". Their sins were covered by the sacrifices which prefigured the full answer in the Messiah's death on the cross.

2 He that walketh uprightly, and worketh righteousness, and speaketh the truth in his heart.

We find three items in this first portion.

The answer to the question hinges upon one's *journey*, one's *labor* and one's *inner heart condition*. Put another way, *how one goes, how one behaves and how one thinks*. If a person simply appears to walk a "religious path", does "good works" but has a heart that does not deal honestly with itself, it falls short of the qualifications listed in this second verse.

To speak "*faithfulness, truth*" in one's heart, one must meditate upon God's Word. With that meditation, one must either increase understanding of God and His righteousness or correct one's paths accordingly. It doesn't leave room for taking God's Word as a minor, side interest. If we don't meditate on it, we can't speak it in our hearts. Now I know a lot of neo-evangelicals will take offence at this, but forget the lie that this psalm is just part of some Old Testament, long since past teaching. It is God's inspired Word and it means what it says! If you doubt it, you are literally "betting" your soul on it for the kind of half-truth found in the tract I quoted from.

3 He that backbiteth not with his tongue, nor doeth evil to his neighbour, nor taketh up a reproach against his neighbour.

If you look at my interlinear, you will see the word for "*foot*". I perceive this verse builds upon the same format of verse 2. It starts with our *journey*, then has the "*doeth*" of the *labor* and ends with the *inner heart condition* that seeks evil against our "*neighbour*".

What we have is the parallel of the wicked way the heaven-bound man *does not* go in. We see the "positive" statement in verse 2 and the "negative" mirror in verse 3.

We can also perceive that the items listed in verse 3 relate to how we treat our neighbor. With that thought, consider that Jesus gave us the answer as to, "*Who is my neighbor?*" The parable of the Good Samaritan answers that. Our neighbor is he who is in need of help. Our fellow human-being. You see, for both the Old and New Testament, we have always had the responsibility to strive to show love and kindness. If all else fails in relating rightly in this towards our fellow human-being, try praying for them. It will be hard to harbor a hatred for someone whom we are praying for God to manifest Himself in their lives. Bitterness of personal slights and personal vengeance are out of the question.

4 In whose eyes a vile person is contemned; but he honoureth them

that fear the LORD. He that sweareth to his own hurt, and changeth not.

Lest there be a misunderstanding of verse 3, we find a very important clarification. A teaching often contradicted amongst many Christian teachers today. Since the details of verse 4 are part of the answer of the kind of behavior we will see is practiced by those heaven-bound, we better not pooh-pooh it.

We can break verse 4 into three line items. The first two form a parallelism. The final one is part of another and final trio that matches what we have seen in verses 2 and 3.

We have considered the statements against maliciously maligning our "neighbor". To cancel the common misunderstanding here, we are also shown the heaven-bound man will hold the vile individual "*despised, vile, worthless*" or as the KJB puts it, "*contemned*". You see, as we view our neighbor, we are not to play some make-believe game of, "they are wonderful", if they are vile. In fact, this verse shows us that if we do not hold such people in "contempt", or "contemn" them, as the KJB puts it, we are not in the same class as this heaven-bound man Psalm 15 is talking about.

Lest this be taken out of perspective, the second portion of this verse acts as a "keel" to keep the boat sailing upright. It actually is easy to contemn the contemnable. After all, everyone can approve of despising someone who killed his own mother. Such scorn doesn't mean one is heaven-bound. The parallel verse must also be active. Such will not be one's perspective of those who "fear God" if one scorns criminals from the worldly perspective of right and wrong. I have actually seen those who call themselves "Christians" dishonoring those who "fear God".

Allow me an illustration for this: I was listening to a "Christian" children's radio program. They had commercial breaks. This was online and the commercial was from the providers of the program. They played a commercial where two children were talking. The one child's parents were strict in her upbringing. They didn't allow television or radios. The other child had typical "go with the flow of the world" parents. After the dialog of the children, the MC of the commercial made some comment like "if you have parents who are "out of the times" then whatever the point was. I don't remember the point, but I do remember it taught it was OK for a child to scorn their "strict" parents "house rules". Based upon what we find in verse 4, those who are heaven-bound will speak respectfully of

those who have “strict house rules” because they are living according to the “fear of the LORD”. They may not necessarily agree in all aspects, but they will hold them in respect for managing their lives after the principal of concern to obey God in all they understand.

I have one more example for this: I don’t find it “evil” to wear clothes with buttons, like some old-order Amish. Though that is the case, I do not poke fun at them because they do fear to wear such buttoned clothing, feeling it is a sin against God. I highly respect their concern to follow their conscience to the fullest.

The first of this final trio group tells us that the heaven-bound man keeps his vows. A promise is no light matter. This first of the three reflects on the first of the three in each of the other two groups. It reflects on his *journey*, the course his life takes.

These last three all reflect on money in one way or another. To swear to ones own potential harm can directly relate to financial obligations, or promises. The following two directly mention money.

5 He that putteth not out his money to usury, nor taketh reward against the innocent. He that doeth these things shall never be moved.

Verse 5 continues from the aspect of *journey* to *labor* and finally *inner heart condition*. It completes the psalm in the “*eternal security*” from the scriptural perspective, not like that quoted from that tract.

Putting out the money on usury is the “*labor*”. It is the working for wealth, but through ungodly means.

“Usury” is “interest”. Now you may wonder, “What is wrong with charging interest?” Our whole economy is founded on the principal of usury. Ah yes, and that is the propelling principal that is destroying our economy at this very moment. A careful reading of Proverbs, on the subject of money, is well worth the time spent. The Old Testament economy was based on entirely different principals to our “usury” system. There were those criminally profiteering, such as the money-changers in the Temple, but Jesus spoke up in their condemnation. You see, it is not wrong for the poor to borrow money.

The Mosaic law provides for that. The wrong is to profit at the poor’s misfortune. If a poor man borrows to survive, God requires we show mercy and loan to him without making our living from his misfortune! This loaning, to those who have no choice for survival, for a fee (usury; interest) is condemned by God. God is merciful and He demands mercy of those who will be spending the rest of eternity in heaven with Him!

Since the issue of making money through charging interest is specifically itemized in the content of a Psalm of the qualifications of those heaven-bound, it behoves us to take real serious consideration of how we invest our money. Is it in some C.D. or other that is making its profit through “usury”? We need to know how our money is being used in our investments. We are responsible for it.

The final inner heart condition warned about is in reflection on covetousness. This can be manifest in a number of ways. In position as a judge, one who judges a matter based upon bribery is violating this passage. In a position such as a policeman or soldier, one who afflicts the innocent, because he was ordered to do so, is violating this passage. For the sake of his “reward”, whether it be promotion, impression of a senior officer or fellow officers or even so one isn’t courtmarshalled for “disobeying orders” is to do so for personal gain at the innocent’s expense. Though I cannot say how much an American soldier would face of such issues, being a soldier in Germany during the time of Hitler would have meant facing being the afflictor or becoming one of the afflicted. Not a pleasant thought, but better to be in the concentration camp as a prisoner than to be in one as the guard.

Moving on to better thoughts, these last three are on the positive side that those who are heaven-bound don’t do these things.

The final phrase puts the not doing into the affirmative of “*doing*”. The “*never be moved*” uses a word for not tottering, or shaking. Kind of like being in an earthquake. This heaven-bound man is so firm, he won’t sway and fall when the earthquake hits. TO ETERNITY HE SHALL STAND. That’s the eternal security my Bible speaks of! **Amen and Amen!**



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The Hebrew text is that of the Second Great Rabbinic Bible, from which
the King James translators made their translation.

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