

Psalm 15 – “Who shall Not Be Moved?”

INTRODUCTION – The first two rhetorical questions in Psalm 15 reveal the theme of this psalm. Psalm 15 is about the qualities found in the life of all believers. This is a most needful psalm in today’s ecumenical climate. Many call themselves Christians but do not exhibit the fruit of the Holy Spirit in their lives. This confusing behaviour adds to the dilution of end time Christianity. Souls of men, women and children are at stake. This is not a small matter to be discounted because eternity in Hell or Heaven is at stake. If a person thinks that he is born again because his pastor or an evangelist tells him so, and then finds out that it is not true after this life, it would have been too late. There is no second chance or recourse to argue before Christ and say that he was deceived! A final state of condemnation or commendation awaits all human beings. The only time that a difference can be made is now, while we are in this earthen vessel.

Therefore, we cannot afford to “think” that we are saved but we must “know” that we are really saved. This is the certainty that God wants all believers to have. Roman Catholicism, Charismaticism and Neo-evangelicalism are the bane of today’s Christian world. The Roman Catholics add to the salvation promise their traditions and the worship of Mary. The Charismatics confuse the truth about salvation by replacing the Word of God with experiences. The Word of God is being relegated to ignominy by the many “new” truths espoused by Charismatic pastors through visions and dreams. Their brand of the gospel message is none other than the health and wealth gospel; believing in Christ means health and wealth in this lifetime. The neo-evangelicals are the worst of all as they claim to be conservative and defenders of the truth when in reality they are compromisers at almost every level. In the area of science, they sing the refrain of theistic evolution; they marry science with theology by Christianizing the evil theory of evolution. In the area of the Bible, they claim to defend God’s truth but they believe that the Bible has mistakes in the past, present or both! In the area of morality, they claim to be holy and righteous, but in fact they preach that it is all right to be a homosexual and a believer at the same time as long as you do not commit the act of homosexuality. They teach that the Bible condemns the act but not the heart and thought of homosexuality. This kind of deceptive teaching runs afoul with Christ’s teaching. Christ categorically declares that if a man lusts after a woman in his heart, he has already committed adultery! How much more the sin of homosexuality!

With the above spiritual climate to contend with, it is no wonder that there are so many who call themselves believers but do not bear the fruit of the Holy Spirit in their lives. Psalm 15 provides enough truths to all believers so that it is impossible for them to not know what it means to be truly born again. Psalm 15:1 describes the believer as one who shall abide in God’s tabernacle or God’s holy Hill. This is a synonymous parallelism used for emphasis. Heaven is his

home. He will live there for eternity. To live in heaven is to dwell in the presence of the thrice holy God. This means that the believer has to be holy or else he will not be allowed to be in God's presence. The believer's sins have to be dealt with, i.e. washed away, in order to be holy before God. The only way his sins can be washed away is through the blood of Jesus Christ. Sins are heinous and the stain of sins remains with us. However, the blood of Christ is able to wash away all the stains and guilt forever. This is how we know that this psalm describes the characteristics of one who is born again.

I. The Positive Characteristics (15:2) – Three verbs are used in this verse to describe the positive characteristics the true believer possesses. The first is that he walks uprightly. His life is a life of righteousness. His life is beyond reproach. He is not lazy but diligent as he knows that whatever he does, he is serving the LORD and not man or mammon. His life is not perfect but right. This righteousness stems from within his soul as the true believer has been imputed with the righteousness of the law. The law of God, therefore, becomes the lamp and light to his feet as he walks along the pathway of life. He knows how to respond correctly to temptations and the evils of this world. He has discernment which is guided by right and wrong as taught in God's Word. He walks rightly with his spouse if he is married. As a Christian wife, she submits to her own husband in everything as unto the LORD. She does so lovingly, willingly and happily. As a Christian husband, he loves his wife as Christ loved His church and gave His life for the church. Like Christ, he is prepared to die for his wife. He will not take advantage of her submission. The wife will not be afraid to submit for she knows that her husband loves her more than life itself! A Christian parent knows how to be a godly mother or father to bring the children up in the fear and nurture of the LORD. A Christian employee or employer knows how to conduct himself with justice and equity in his dealings with everyone. He is motivated by the love of Christ in all that he does. In short, he is blameless in all areas of his life.

The second verb is one of working righteousness. He will do only deeds that are characterized by righteousness, i.e. according to Holy Scriptures. He will not sweep sin under the carpet for the sake of false peace. He confronts sins and deals with the sin and the sinner judiciously and always tempered with mercy when genuine repentance is found. He will not succumb to temptation as he hates sin the same way that God hates sins. He will not be seduced as he constantly seeks first the righteous God and His righteousness. Sinful and harmful deeds are avoided at all costs. He prays and leans on God to see him through. He is constantly led by the Spirit of God for deeds of righteousness.

The third verb is to speak the truth in his heart. The heart is the seed of all thoughts and actions. The thought begins inside the person before it becomes an action. Truthfulness is his hallmark in life. He means what he says and says what he means. He does not have any hidden

agenda when he deals with people. He is sincere and upfront. He is transparent in all his dealings. He will not lie for anyone. He is careful with his speech and seasons his speech with salt.

II. The Negative Characteristics (15:3) – Obeying the positive commands of God is good but if there is no obedience to the negative commands, then it becomes hypocrisy. Verse 3 highlights the “do nots” in the believer’s life. Just as there are three positives, there are also three negatives to avoid. The first is that a believer will not backbite with his tongue. This includes written words. To backbite is to talk behind a person’s back things that are untrue and with the purpose to assassinate his character. There is a big difference between backbiting and reporting to the relevant authority. When Joseph gave an evil report about his older brothers’ sin of slothfulness to their father, he was not backbiting his brothers. He was doing his duty as a faithful son looking after their father’s sheep. The father has every right to know. This is called being our brother’s keeper. Likewise, when a member in the church sees a brother in sin and reports him to the elders, it is his duty to do so, especially when the person who sinned is much older than the witness. The membership oath and the Bible’s teaching about being our brother’s keeper apply here. However, if it is reported to one who is totally not supposed to know, with the motive to harm and destroy, then it is backbiting which is a grievous sin. A believer must not have such a characteristic in his life.

The second negative is not to do evil to one’s neighbour. The evil here is to hurt and destroy the neighbour rather than to help. A teacher disciplining a lazy or disobedient student is not doing evil. The word “evil” does not describe giving in to the person’s wants and fancies. For example, when a person clearly does not have the gift of teaching and he is allowed to teach Sunday School because he wants to and he is the son of a prominent elder, it is not an act of evil to disallow him from teaching. It is not an evil act to stop such a person from hurting himself and the ministry. This is from the teachings in God’s Word and not something subjective.

The third negative is to not take up a reproach against his neighbor. This means to not shame his neighbor. He is not to embarrass anyone at all. He is to be tactful and consider the feelings of others. Sometimes a right action may not be the best action as it might shame the person by insisting on one’s right. A cautionary note to bear in mind is that if an elder has sinned a grievous sins, the Bible’s teaching is that he must make a publicly apology before the congregation who elected him into office. He has betrayed their trust by that grievous sin. He cannot be excused from this public apology for the reason that his family might be shamed or he might be embarrassed. It is his sin that has shamed his family and brought shame to himself and the office of an elder in God’s church.

III. The Biblical Relationships (15:4-5) – The believer has great discernment. He evaluates all people based upon God’s standard as revealed in God’s perfect Word. He will not allow faces of the rich to colour his judgement. A vile person as determined by Holy Scriptures will be condemned in his sight. He will not be persuaded by money or threats. He has courage and integrity. He honours those who fear the LORD. These are the righteous ones who will do what is right and will not do what is wrong. He bases his judgements on right and wrong and truth and erroneous according to Holy Scriptures. He keeps his word. Even if it means he has to suffer loss, he will not break his word. If he has given his word in a business deal to pay for the shipping and handling of his goods, but later realizes that the signed contract states that the client pays for the shipping and handling, he will not go back on his word. The shipping and handling could cost thousands of dollars, but the believer has given his word; he must bear the loss and keep his word! He will not and cannot go back on his word.

He will not put his money out to usury, i.e. to take interest on a debt especially when he is lending money to the poor and the orphans. In other words, he will not take advantage of the trodden who cannot help themselves. He will help them and will not take advantage of them. He will also not take reward from the innocent - he will not take a bribe and condemn the innocent. He is above reproach. He will not sell justice for gain. He upholds the truth and treats everyone with the same respect and honesty.

CONCLUSION – The believer who possesses and does the above will never be moved from the tabernacle or holy Hill of the LORD. It will be his home for eternity. His heart and life bear and exemplify the marks of a child of God. The fruit of the Holy Spirit is seen in his life and relationships with others. AMEN.