

### Moral Qualities that Should Characterize “Guests of God”

#### Psalm 15

**Psalm 15** – *“LORD, who may abide in Your tabernacle? Who may dwell in Your holy hill? He who walks uprightly, and works righteousness, and speaks the truth in his heart. He who does not backbite with his tongue, nor does evil to his neighbor, nor does he take up a reproach against his friend.*

*In his eyes a vile person is despised, but he honors those who fear the LORD. He swears to his own hurt and does not change; he 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.”*

#### Background Notes

Psalm 15 is definitely a contrast to Psalm 14. Psalm 14 lists the characteristics of the godless fool, but Psalm 15 lists the moral qualities that characterize of the godly “guests of God.” When the psalms were arranged in book form, these two psalms were probably placed together for that very reason - and certainly for the Holy Spirit’s purposes.

Why do we use the phrase “the guests of God”? We use it is because of the background of verse 1: *“Lord, who may abide [or sojourn] in Your tabernacle [or tent]?*

*Who may dwell in Your holy hill?”* These two questions are written in the repeating pattern of “Hebrew parallelism,” and they essentially ask the same question: Who will be the guests of God?

Remember when the Lord and two angels visited Abraham? In the Genesis 18 account, the Lord and the angels appeared as men who were traveling in Abraham’s area. Abraham, as a good host, invited them to come into his tent, sit down, rest, and eat a meal with him.

That’s the basic idea Psalm 15:1. The Lord is the host, and the question is raised: “Who is morally qualified to be the Lord’s guests? Who qualifies to be invited into the His tent?” The Lord’s “tent” that is mentioned here is the tent that David erected on Mount Zion in Jerusalem to house the Ark of the Covenant until the Temple could be built (2 Samuel 6:17).

So again, with the imagery of the host and his personal tent, the question is raised as to who is morally qualified to be the guest of the Lord? Certainly the unrighteous and the ungodly are not qualified, but rather *“he who walks uprightly and works righteousness and speaks the truth in his heart”* (v2).

In verses 3-5 a list of moral qualities is given. These qualities should characterize the believer who is qualified to fellowship with the Lord, as a guest of God, in His tent.

## Doctrinal Points

### 1. The guests of God will dwell in the Lord's earthly kingdom.

In Psalm 14, David longed for the righteous kingdom of God to be established on earth: *"Oh, that the salvation of Israel would come out of Zion! When the LORD brings back the captivity of His people, let Jacob rejoice and Israel be glad" (Psalm 14:4).*

At the conclusion of our Talk on Psalm 14, we said that David's desire for Israel to be restored to the Lord would finally be realized when the Lord returns to earth at His second coming. At that time, the righteous kingdom of God will be established on this earth, Jerusalem will be the capital of our Lord's kingdom on earth, and a literal Temple of the Lord will be built as a place of worship.

Only the righteous will enter this kingdom. Unbelievers who are living at that time will be judged. Believers who are living then will enter the Lord's earthly kingdom. In addition, believers of all time will be part of that kingdom - including Old Testament saints and New Testament saints, who will be in their resurrected bodies.

So in the "Question and Answer" session of Psalm 15:1-2, there is a prophetic glimpse into the future. We see the righteous guests of God who will enter that earthly kingdom of our Lord. *"Lord, who may abide (or sojourn) in Your tabernacle (or tent)? Who may dwell in Your holy hill?"* The guests of God will dwell in the Lord's earthly kingdom.

### 2. The guests of God exhibit the highest moral qualities.

Verse 2 gives us the overall general answer to the question, "Who are the guests of God?" That answer is, *"He who walks uprightly, and works righteousness, and speaks the truth in his heart."*

Verses 3-5 provide a more detailed description of the moral qualities that characterize the guests who will be invited into God's tent to enjoy His company.

- The guest of God does not *"backbite with his tongue,"* meaning he does not slander others (v3). Did you ever make a negative comment about someone – a comment that wasn't true? Did you make that comment because you were jealous, or didn't want someone else to get some praise? Or maybe you just passed on a negative comment or gossip or rumor that someone passed on to you? That's slander - and it's sin!

I was once slandered, and it really hurt. Someone passed on a rumor that I always fly First Class when I go on ministry trips. The rumor implied that I was “wasting the Lord’s money.” It was completely false. I always fly Economy - never First Class! On one occasion I happened to be bumped up to First - but I didn’t pay a dime extra! I’ll never know who started that lie, but it spread, and it hurt. Let’s be very careful not to become involved in slander.

- The guest of God “*does no wrong to his neighbor*” (v3). The term “neighbor” applies to all close contacts: people you work with, or go to school with, or people in your neighborhood. Have you ever wronged your neighbor? Did you ever put up a fence that was actually a little bit over the property line, on your neighbor’s property? Have you ever blamed your neighbor’s kids for some wrong that your own children did? The guest of God does not wrong his neighbor.
- The guest of God does not allow slurs to be cast against his friend (v3). In fact, he goes out of his way to defend his friend, if at all possible.

Notice: more than anything else, in verse 3 **all three moral qualities of the guest of God have to do with our words**! What we say and how we use our tongue is critical. **Words are powerful.** God holds us accountable for what we **say**, as well as what we **do**. The Lord Jesus said, “*But I say to you that for every idle word men may speak, they will give account of it in the day of judgment*” (Matthew 12:36).

About the tongue, James said: “*The tongue is a small part of the body, but it makes great boasts. Consider what a great forest is set on fire by a small spark. The tongue also is a fire, a world of evil among the parts of the body. It corrupts the whole body, sets the whole course of one’s life on fire, and is itself set on fire by hell. All kinds of animals, birds, reptiles and sea creatures are being tamed and have been tamed by mankind, but no human being can tame the tongue. It is a restless evil, full of deadly poison*” (James 3:5-8).

Psalm 15:4 says that the guest of God “*despises a vile person.*” He doesn’t honor sinful people, but he looks up to and honors those who fear the Lord: “*In whose eyes a vile person is despised, but he honors those who fear the Lord*” (v4).

Whom do you cheer for in books, in movies, or even in the news - the good guys or the bad guys? We demonstrate our righteous character by disapproving of evil deeds and those who commit them - and of course by giving our outspoken approval of people who do the right thing! This is true of nations as well as individuals. Proverbs 14:34 says, “*Righteousness exalts a nation, but sin is a reproach to any people.*”

Psalm 15:5 tells us that the guest of God does not “*put his money out at usury.*” He doesn’t charge unfair interest on loans, nor does he take bribes to judge against the innocent. We readily understand about not taking bribes. The saying

that “everyone has a price” is **not** true about righteous people! Righteous people do the right thing without being offered rewards.

But what about not loaning money at “usury,” or interest? This goes back to the Old Testament Law. When fellow-Jews were in need, God’s people were to loan them money without charging interest. God’s Law said, *“If you lend money to any of My people who are poor among you, you shall not be like a money lender to them. You shall not charge them interest”* (Exodus 22:25). In Leviticus 25:35-37 God says: *“If one of your brethren becomes poor, and falls into poverty among you, then you shall help him, like a stranger or a sojourner, that he may live with you. Take no usury or interest from him; but fear your God, that your brother may live with you. You shall not lend him your money for usury, nor lend him your food at a profit.”*

As Christians, we are no longer under the Old Testament Law, but the **moral principles** of the Law still apply. God’s moral principles never end. The moral principle here is: that if we want to be guests of God, we will try to help the poor with their financial struggles, as much as possible. The guest of God exhibits the highest moral quality.

## Practical Application

### Would we rather lie than die - or would we die, rather than lie?

Do you remember the expressions used about Communism during the Cold War days: “Better dead than red” – and “Better red than dead”? In a much larger context, and as a general principle for life, would you lie rather than die - or would you die rather than lie? The end of Psalm 15:4 tells us what the righteous person will *“keep an oath even when it hurts, and does not change their mind.”*

Do you remember the three Jewish men in Daniel 3, who chose to die rather than lie? They told King Nebuchadnezzar, *“If we are thrown into the blazing furnace, the God we serve is able to deliver us from it... But even if he does not, we want you to know, Your Majesty, that we will not serve your gods or worship the image of gold you have set up.”* We know that the Lord did indeed deliver them from death, but they were willing to die rather than deny their faith in the one true God of Israel.

The righteous person keeps his promise - even when it hurts! The righteous person does the right thing. The righteous person realizes that doing the right thing (including telling the truth at all times) is a higher moral principle than saving his own life. He does not compromise the truth, even to the point of death.

The righteous person would rather die than lie. What about us? Think about it. Would I be willing to lie, to escape being put to death? Or would I rather die than lie?