

Psalm 15

Written by K B Napier
Thursday, 13 January 2011 16:15

Paul was not the only person to tell us how we should be as believers. In this Psalm David does the same thing. Why do you think scripture contains these instructions and commands? As I keep saying, they are not options, to be used or ignored at will. They are imperatives, to be obeyed. Once you know what God says about anything at all, you are bound to obey, immediately. Indeed, even when we do not know what God says, we are bound.

Surely God will not leave us ignorant? No, He does not. He speaks to us through the indwelling Holy Spirit, Who prompts us continually in the ways of the Lord. We cannot claim ignorance as a shield against God's demands. Do what scripture says.

Verse 1

1.

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

David here asks God who is able to live in His Temple and in His 'holy hill'. Like the book of Isaiah, this verse has dual meaning. Whilst some commentators take this to only have a figurative meaning, I suggest it has both literal and figurative meanings.

It can refer to those within Israel who are qualified by their heart-state and belief to enter the Temple of God on earth, and the holy hill meaning the hill on which Jerusalem stood, counted as holy ground. It is a mistake to think that the 'holy hill' or 'holy mountain' of God only refers to Heaven (which it rarely does)... it has an earthly meaning, too.

The answers given by God through David are also dual in application. The first is simply that only true believers can enter the Temple and its precincts. Here, though, we will concentrate on the figurative reference, to holy people who will enter Heaven. They will act according to these instructions because they are saved – they do not give salvation itself.

Verses 2-5

1.

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

2.

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

3.

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.

4.

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

The post-salvation 'qualifications' for those who will enter Heaven are many, but note that David's answers are based on the worship of God at that time, based on the Temple and certain acts of persons and the practice of certain rites and traditions.

Even so, whether one did these things or not, the real criterion was faith, based on personal salvation. A man can reproduce all the requirements found in this Psalm and yet never be accepted by God, because his practices are out of duty and not from the heart of belief.

The one who will enter Heaven must walk uprightly. Not just outwardly (many do this today in our churches – they appear to be gentle, kind, good and holy when in their churches, but are very different at home, in private life and in the heart). Everything about this man is good and true; his faith is genuine, bubbling up from a heart fixed on God. His religion is sincere and upright.

How many are like this today? It means that everything in the man's life is honourable and holy, pure and true, as he lives by every word in God's Bible. He does so because he loves the Lord,

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not out of ordinary duty or because others expect it of him. Do not be legalistic about this, for we all fail in this standard at some time; repent, carry on and have compassion for those who are weaker.

Such a genuine man “worketh righteousness”. That is, he is right before God, doing what is just and living in the victory that is God’s. The interesting word ‘worketh’ might imply that acceptance by God is through works – what the man does. But, it does not mean that. ‘Worketh’, means ‘to do’. In the Hebrew it refers to the man who is righteous and who does these works because they are ordained.

It is the same in the Christian, for the pre-Christ Jew and the post-Christ Christian are both saved by faith (itself given by God). Thus, a man who is saved by grace will (or SHOULD – many try to avoid this holiness, but God will one day cause their hearts to weep and change) do works that are fitted to that salvation, because the Holy Spirit prompts both. This means that the man is not accepted by God because he ‘works righteousness’ alone, but because he is already right in God’s eyes, and saved, and his works are a proper sign of his salvation.

The man will also speak “the truth in his heart”. Many men speak the truth openly in public, but deny it in their private lives, and in their heads and hearts. Many pastors and preachers do not believe what they preach, yet they do it anyway, to earn money, or status, or respect of peers. God will deal roughly with such hypocrites.

As I write out this study I am telling you what I actually believe in my heart. It is not an empty gesture just to capture your mind or to gain a following. I really mean what I write to you. It is that of God within my soul. Everything I do is consistent with what is in my heart. Yes, I can sometimes falter or fail, but this does not mean my heart is false. It just means I am human and can sometimes fall. My heart remains unchanged. If it were not so, I would be living a lie and even if I managed to teach what is true, it would work against me, because I am an hypocrite, bringing judgment upon my head! And the ‘truth’ I speak from my heart? This is everything God says. Thus, what I say must be true doctrine, for it is based solely on God’s word.

The believer must not ‘backbite’ “with his tongue”. It is a sad fact that I hear much backbiting from the churches. It is why I have sometimes said “If you want to be abused, join a church”. (Cynical, but sadly true in many cases). To backbite is to carry tales of others, and to deliberately find others to tell. In this there is a degree of malevolence, and a wish to slander someone else, probably for shock value. It is to habitually carry tales and tittle-tattle, behind the

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victim's back.

In this there is no love for the brethren, and believers should beware, for the tales told to you by the backbiter can easily turn upon your own head... you may very well be the next victim, if you are not already! The backbiter must not just be ignored – he or she must be dealt with summarily, rebuked and warned of dire consequences, if they do not silence their tongues. The consequence would be two warnings and rebuke, with a demand to change. A third rebuke would be to cast out of fellowship and to shun. Such is the nasty nature of backbiting, which can ruin lives and sour the whole church.

The person will not harm his neighbour. By neighbour is meant firstly saved brethren, but also those who live around us, as *rea'* shows. We must not set out to do them evil; what is unpleasant or bad, displeasing or nasty. There is nothing better to neutralise the sin of others towards us, than to do them good! It does not always work, though. If the ones we treat well are reprobate, they will probably throw our good-will back in our faces, no matter how well we have treated them. But, this is to their own shame, not ours. Their doing evil in return for good will be heaped upon them like burning coals, as God displays His wrath against them.

Nor may we reproach our neighbour. That is, we must not scorn or taunt them, or treat them shamefully. This can be very hard to do for those who are attacked and treated viciously by neighbours (anyone). It takes great inner peace to stand firm and not to hit out... let no Christian tell you otherwise! Even so, this is God's desire for us – He will reward our faithfulness.

“A vile person is contemned” by a righteous man. Here we see a person being called ‘vile’, despite the wails of protest from modern Christians, most of whom have never had direct contact with vile people! They do exist, and as the country and even some churches sink into a pit of immorality and godlessness, we can expect to see many more vile people, and feel their hatred.

As more and more people live without godliness, even in outward form, we see sin rampaging. The righteous man hates these things but loves those who are holy and good. For him, the vile person is worthless – we know this because that is how God thinks of men and women who live godlessly. He sees them as vile and condemned, and so should we.

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Vile people are the unsaved who think and act abominably. We cannot deny that the world, even our own street and town, is filled with a growing number of vile people. For this reason we cannot mix with them for any reason, except we risk our own good names and spiritual well-being. We must always treat them respectfully and courteously, but we may not befriend them. Even if befriended, these vile people will turn on the Christian in a flash. So, avoid them and never want to be like them.

This puts a question on what we watch on TV... certain programmes are filled with woes and depression, sin and wickedness. Yet, Christians relish them as if they were nectar! They are of no use at all, and will affect Christians badly. One cannot watch and listen to such drivel every day without having the same sinful ways etched into our minds and hearts. We might avoid direct contact with vile people – but then we watch them instead, on TV... a joining with the vile by proxy! It should not be so. (The same goes for today's music scene.

It is far better to honour the godly. Watch them. Do what they do. There is nothing wrong with emulating a godly person, because that person is displaying God's ways and acts. The true Christian will promise something and stick to it, no matter what happens. His name MUST be associated with truth and honour. Many today say they will do something, but will easily break their promise. This is not a Christian trait! We must be known for keeping our word, even if it harms our own lives. At times we cannot foretell that a decision of ours will turn on us. Nevertheless, we must keep the promise, if it was made in good faith.

The final thing God notes in a righteous man is that he will not use his money for usury. That is, he will not give out loans with the expectation of earning interest from it. Not only does it usually place the borrower in a bad position, by reducing his living conditions and increasing his debt, but it means the usurer is acting against God's will. If we have money to loan, let it be without strings attached and without charging interest. The other person should feel comfortable and not afraid of not being able to repay. Even better is to give as a gift.

It also means that a Christian with money should not live by loaning out what he has and living on the proceeds. Rather, he should live by his own efforts, and not on the strength of riches. Tell that to bankers! Nor will he give out loans and be overly zealous in collecting his dues. The poor borrower usually will not borrow unless he is desperate, and this ought to be borne in mind.

The man of God who does these things "will not be moved". As a believer his root is in the Rock

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of Ages, God, not in sand. If he lives by God's word God will reward him with solid, sound living. As the man treats poorer people, so God will treat him. He will not be moved, or easily swayed away from his godly principles and stand. The more righteously he lives the less he will be troubled by doubts and fears, worries and depression. He will know deep peace as he lives on the holy hill, in his heart.

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