

PSALM 15

INTRODUCTION TO PSALM 15

A Psalm of David

As in the preceding psalm, according to Theodoret, the salvation of the inhabitants of Jerusalem is foretold, and the liberty of the captives; so in this advice is given to them, and the life they ought to live proposed, who should share in such benefits.

Ver. 1. *Lord, who shall abide in thy tabernacle?* etc.] This question, with the following, is put by the psalmist in a view of the sad corruption and degeneracy of mankind described in the preceding psalm, which renders the sons of men unfit for the presence of God, and communion with him; and it is put to the Lord himself, the founder of Zion, who has set his King over this holy hill of his; who has enacted laws for the good of it, and brings his people thither, making them meet for it, and so is most proper to give the qualifications of such as are admitted here; for by the tabernacle is meant not the human nature of Christ, as in (³⁸¹²Hebrews 8:2 9:11); as some interpret it, and apply all the characters in the following verses to Christ; nor heaven itself, of which the holy place made with hands in the tabernacle and temple were a figure, (³⁸¹²Hebrews 9:24); for to “sojourn” ^{f227} or “lodge”, as in an inn, as the word rendered abide signifies, will not suit with that state and place which is fixed and immovable; but the church of God on earth, called a “tabernacle”, in allusion to the tabernacle of Moses, where God granted his presence, sacrifices were offered up with acceptance, and the holy vessels were put; and which was mean without, but rich and glorious within: so God affords his gracious presence in his church, accepts the spiritual sacrifices of prayer and praise offered to him there; and here are the vessels of mercy placed, which are sanctified and meet for the master’s use; and though it is mean and despicable in its outward appearance, in the eyes of men, it is all glorious within; (see ²⁰⁰⁶Song of Solomon 1:6); and this is the tabernacle of God, being of his building and preserving, and the place of his residence;

who shall dwell in thy holy hill? the same is here intended as in the preceding clause; the allusion is to Mount Zion, whither the ark of the Lord was brought in David's time, and on one part of which the temple was afterwards built: and the church may be compared to this hill, for its eminence and visibility in the world; for the holiness which God has put upon it, and for the immovableness of it; for though like, a tabernacle it may be carried from place to place, yet it is like an hill that can never be removed out of the world; it is built on a sure foundation, the Rock of ages. Now the purport of these questions is, who is a proper person to be an inhabitant of Zion? or to be a member of the church of God? the answer is in the following verses.

Ver. 2. *He that walketh uprightly*, etc.] Or “perfectly”^{f228}; (see <0170>Genesis 17:1); not so as to be without sin entirely, but as not to be chargeable with any notorious crime, and living in it; moreover, perfection and uprightness often signify sincerity, and the phrase here may design an Israelite indeed, in whom is no guile; whose faith is unfeigned, whose love is without dissimulation, whose hope is without hypocrisy, and his whole conduct without fraud and deceit; likewise such an one may be said to walk uprightly who walks according to the truth of the Gospel, and by faith on Christ and in Christ, as he has received him; and such an one is fit to be a member of a Gospel church;

and worketh righteousness; not in order to his justification before God; for not such an one, but he that trusts in the Lord for righteousness, shall inherit his holy mountain, (<2570>Isaiah 57:12,13); but he that works the work of faith, and believes in the righteousness of Christ; who looks to it and receives it; that lays hold on it and pleads it as his justifying righteousness; he that does righteousness in this sense, is righteous as Christ is righteous, (<0170>1 John 3:7); and such an one is a proper person to dwell in his house; and who also by faith does works of righteousness, and whose life is a series and course of righteousness, as a fruit of his faith, and in consequence of his having laid hold on the righteousness of Christ;

and speaketh the truth in his heart; receives Christ who is the truth, and the Gospel the word of truth into his heart, and makes an hearty profession of the same before men; and both speaks according to his light in the Scriptures of truth, whenever he speaks of divine things; and in common conversation speaks truth from his heart to his neighbour, and does not speak with a double heart, or say one thing with his mouth, and intend

another in his heart; (see ^{<912D>}Psalm 12:2); or endeavour to deceive persons, and impose a falsehood on them, or tell them lies; for as such a person is not fit to dwell in a private house, or to be in a civil society, much less is he a proper person to be in the house of God.

Ver. 3. [*He that*] *backbiteth not with his tongue*, etc.] Is not a slanderer, a defamer, a tale bearer; a backbiter is one who privately, secretly, behind a man's back speaks evil of him, devours and destroys his credit and reputation: the word here used comes from **l gr**, which signifies the “foot”, and denotes such a person who goes about from house to house, speaking things he should not, (^{<54E13>}1 Timothy 5:13); and a word from this root signifies spies; and the phrase here may point at such persons who creep into houses, pry into the secrets of families, and divulge them, and oftentimes represent them in a false light. Such are ranked amongst the worst of men, and are very unfit to be in the society of the saints, or in a church of Christ; (see ^{<61E13>}Romans 1:30) (^{<47E21>}2 Corinthians 12:20);

nor doeth evil to his neighbour: to any man whatever, good or bad, friend or foe, whether in a natural, civil, or spiritual relation, either by words or deeds, to his person, property, or good name;

nor taketh up, a reproach against his neighbour; does not raise any scandalous report on him himself, nor will he bear to hear one from another, much less will he spread one; nor will he suffer one to lie upon his neighbour, but will do all he can to vindicate him, and clear his character.

Ver. 4. [*In whose eyes a vile person is contemned*, etc.] A “vile” man is a very wicked, profligate, and abandoned creature, one that is to every good work reprobate; and such sometimes are in high places, (^{<91E8>}Psalm 12:8) (^{<271E2>}Daniel 11:21); and are greatly caressed and esteemed by the men of the world; but then, as they are an abomination to God, they should be despised by his people, let them be what they will as to their riches, honours, and wisdom among men; as Haman was by Mordecai, (^{<47E18>}Esther 3:2); and Ahab by Elisha, (^{<11E18>}2 Kings 3:14); and such who keep company with, and express a delight and pleasure in such sort of persons, ought by no means to have a place in the house of God. Some understand this of a good man being “despised in his own eyes”, as it may be rendered ^{f229}; on account of his vileness, and the imperfection of his obedience, and as expressive of his great humility, esteeming others better than himself; and who renounces himself, and is rejected by himself, having a very mean

opinion of himself; which is the sense of the Targum, Aben Ezra, and Kimchi; and which is no bad sense, though the former is countenanced by what follows;

but he honoureth them that fear the Lord; who have the covenant grace of fear wrought in their hearts, and serve the Lord with reverence and godly fear; that is, who are truly religious and godly persons; these such who are fit members of the church of Christ love heartily, esteem of highly, and honour them by thinking and speaking well of them, and behaving with great respect and decency to them; (see ^{<5120>}Romans 12:10);

[he that] sweareth to [his own] hurt, and changeth not; having taken a solemn oath, so sacred is it with him, and such a regard has he to the name of God, by whom he swears, that though it is to his civil loss and detriment, yet he will not break it and depart from it, but punctually observe it: some render it, “he that swears to his neighbour, and changeth not” ^{f230}; he that is just to his word, faithful to his promises, that exactly fulfils all the obligations he lays himself under unto others; he that is honest and upright in all his dealings. The Jewish writers interpret this clause of a man’s vowing and swearing to afflict himself by fasting, which, though it is to the emaciating of his body, yet he strictly observes his vow or oath; but this is foreign from the scope of the place: it might be rendered, “he that swears to do evil, and does not recompense or perform” ^{f231}, it being better to break through such an oath than to keep it; (see ^{<4884>}Leviticus 5:4).

Ver. 5. *[He that] putteth not out his money to usury*, etc.] To the poor, in an extravagant and exorbitant way, by which he bites, devours, and destroys his little substance, and sadly afflicts and distresses him; (see ^{<4225>}Exodus 22:25); otherwise, to lend money on moderate interest, and according to the laws, customs, and usages of nations, and to take interest for it, is no more unlawful than to take interest for houses and land; yea, it is according to the law of common justice and equity, that if one man lends money to another to trade with, and gain by, that he should have a proportionate share in the gain of such a trade; but the design of this passage, and the law on which it is founded, is, to forbid all exactions and oppressions of the poor, and all avaricious practices, and to encourage liberality and beneficence; and such who are covetous, and bite and oppress the poor, are not fit for church communion; (see ^{<4511>}1 Corinthians 5:11 ^{<4885>}Ephesians 5:5);

nor taketh reward against the innocent; either to swear falsely against him, or to pass a wrong sentence on him; (see ^{<611B>}1 Samuel 12:3);

he that doeth these [things] shall never be moved; from the tabernacle of God, and his holy hill; he is fit to be a member of the church of God, and an inhabitant of Zion; and he shall dwell and abide there, he shall be a pillar which shall never go out, (^{<6112>}Revelation 3:12); he shall finally persevere, through the grace of God; he shall hold on and out unto the end: and though he may fall through infirmity and temptation into sin, and that many times, yet he shall not finally and totally fall, (^{<6110>}2 Peter 1:10); but shall be as Mount Zion which can never be removed, (^{<6131>}Psalms 125:1,2); The words should be rendered, since the accent “athnach” is on **h**l a, “these things”, thus; “he that doeth these things”, not only what is mentioned in this verse, but in the foregoing, “he”, I say, “shall never be moved”.