

Abiding near the Lord

Psalm 15: 1-5

Again we have read a psalm of David. Like many before, this is a passionate psalm that provokes deep consideration and adoration for the Lord. It is evident that David was pondering the presence of the Lord and what was necessary to abide in His presence. David longed to be near the Lord and sought to instruct others to make necessary preparations to abide near Him as well.

It is believed this psalm was written during the time preparations were being made to bring the ark into the Tabernacle in Jerusalem. Some also believe Jesus may have used this psalm as His text as He preached the Sermon on the Mount. For centuries the church has recognized this psalm in association with the ascension of Christ the Lord. He lived a perfect, sinless life, fulfilling the divine will of God regarding redemption, and ascended back to His glorious position, seated at the right hand of the Father.

With these applications in mind, and considering the arrangement of the Psalms, these verses bring joy and assurance to our hearts. The previous psalm dealt with the utter depravity of man and our inability to commune with God. This psalm pictures the person and work of Christ our Savior and the blessed assurance afforded those who are saved by His marvelous grace.

Let's take a few moments to consider the [reflections](#) of David in this passage as we think on: [Abiding near the Lord](#).

I. A Question to Ponder (1) – [LORD, who shall abide in thy tabernacle? who shall dwell in thy holy hill?](#)

Here David poses a thought provoking question, one that stirs our hearts. Consider:

A. His Passion (1) – The passion and desire of David is evident in this question. He expresses his genuine desire to be near the Lord. He had experienced fellowship with the Lord in the past and he longed to enjoy that communion again. This was his heart's desire: to be near the Lord.

- Should that not be our genuine desire as well? Our lives are so busy, filled with all kinds of distractions and hindrances. We need to share the passion David had for the Lord, longing to be near Him, earnestly abiding in His presence. Far too often, our time with the Lord is not made a priority. If we aren't careful, we will make little preparation to enter His presence, and go great lengths of time without really communing with Him. We need genuine passion for the Lord.

B. His Purpose (1) – The Bible teaches us that David was a man after the heart of God. He enjoyed a closeness with the Lord that few ever obtain. Much of his life was lived seeking a closer walk with the Lord. However, we also know of David's failures. There were seasons in life when he strayed from the Lord, creating separation and a lack of fellowship. David was searching his own heart as He pondered the gracious and divine presence of the Lord. He wanted to ensure he had prepared his heart to enter the Lord's presence.

- We too must share this purpose and sense the urgency in our daily walk with the Lord. I am convinced of the security of believers. The shed blood of Christ was sufficient to atone for all sin, once and for all. For the believer, this is no longer a matter of redemption, but of fellowship. We must prepare our hearts and lives if we are to enjoy the presence of the Lord. We cannot live as we please and expect to commune with the Lord. We must do as David and consider the holy nature of the Lord and deal with any sin in our lives that would hinder fellowship with Him. Unconfessed sin will prevent fellowship with Christ. [Psalm 139:23-24 – Search me, O God, and know my heart: try me, and know my thoughts:](#) ^[24] [And see if *there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting.*](#)

C. His Preference (1) – David considered abiding in the tabernacle of the Lord which sat in His holy hill. The Tabernacle housed the ark of God, the place where His glorious presence dwelt above the mercy seat. The holy hill was situated in Jerusalem, the place associated with the divine presence of the Lord. David reveals he is not seeking a mere glimpse or the remnants of God's presence; he longs to be near the place where God dwells. He longs to be as close to God as he can possibly get, receiving all the Lord has to offer!

- I have often said that we live below our means spiritually. Often we are content to simply attend services and go through the religious motions without ever experiencing the presence of God in genuine worship. I don't want to settle for emotional experiences or the testimonies of past blessings. I want to be near the spout where the glory comes out. I want to be near the Lord, experiencing His manifest presence through the Holy Spirit. Often we experience the Lord in His house as we gather for worship, but our encounters with Him don't have to be limited to this building. We are the body of Christ, the church. The Spirit resides within us as the temple of God. If our lives are lived pleasing to Christ, in communion with Him, we can enjoy His presence wherever we are! That should be the goal and desire of every believer!

II. The Qualities to Possess (2-5) – In the remaining verses David speaks of the qualities one must possess to abide near the Lord. Christ certainly possessed these qualities and we must strive to obtain them as well. They include:

A. An Honorable Walk (2) – *He that walketh uprightly, and worketh righteousness, and speaketh the truth in his heart.* David knew his walk before the Lord and men would affect his ability to abide near the Lord. He must strive to walk upright in life, seeking a path of righteousness, having his heart right with the Lord. He could not live and behave any way he chose and commune with God.

- These qualities are lacking in many today. We live in a society that has few standards or boundaries. People are encouraged to live as they please, seeking pleasure and fulfillment by whatever means necessary. This approach and lifestyle will not provide fellowship with the Lord. We must seek to live an upright life before the Lord and men. We must daily strive to please the Lord in all we do, while speaking truth from our hearts.

- This will not always be easy. In our modern society, you will be going against the grain. However, we cannot conform to the demands of this life, seeking to please the world. We must walk in a way that pleases the Lord, testifying of His grace, even if we are forced to walk alone! [1 John 2:6](#) – *He that saith he abideth in him ought himself also so to walk, even as he walked.*

B. An Honest Word (3) – *He that backbiteth not with his tongue, nor doeth evil to his neighbour, nor taketh up a reproach against his neighbour.* David knew one must speak in a manner pleasing to the Lord as well. We cannot portray righteousness to others if our words betray us. Much damage has been done to individual witnesses and the church at large by unbridled tongues.

- In order to live pleasing to the Lord, we must practice restraint in our speech. The flesh wants to respond in like manner, but we must refrain from backbiting and gossip. Trading insults and slandering others never solves problems and hinders the work of the Lord. If we are to abide in Christ, we must be willing to refrain from unprofitable accusations and hurtful words.

- Much damage has been done by loose tongues. Words spoken in haste or anger create irreparable damage that often endures for years. May we never be guilty of seeking to hurt, tear down, or bring reproach on others with our speech! If such conversation comes easy and is often spoken, there is a problem within the heart. [James 3:10-12](#) – *Out of the same mouth proceedeth blessing and cursing. My brethren, these things ought not so to be.* ^[11] *Doth a fountain send forth at the same place sweet water and bitter?* ^[12] *Can the fig tree, my brethren, bear olive berries? either a vine, figs? so can no fountain both yield salt water and fresh.* An unbridled tongue hinders fellowship with the Lord and creates damage within the body of Christ.

C. A Humble Witness (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.* David spoke of humility before the Lord through steadfastness of faith. He sought to be a man of conviction and honor, even if those

around him chose a different path. He would not approve of dishonest or vile deeds even though it was acceptable or profitable. He always sought to honor and respect those who feared the Lord. David was also a man of his word, even if keeping his word became a disadvantage. He sought to present a consistent witness to the world.

- These are simple matters of principle, but they carry enormous weight even today. Much that is contrary to Scripture and the Christian faith has become profitable in modern society. Some are tempted to abandon their convictions and mar their witness for profit or social acceptance. We must remain committed to biblical principles even if we have to stand alone. We must be willing to stand with those of like faith, even if we are ridiculed and persecuted for doing so. We must remain committed to our word and our principles, even if it cost us financially or socially!

D. A Hospitable Way (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.* Greed and the love of riches has been a snare for many throughout history. Many are willing to take advantage of others for financial gain. They will use their wealth as a means of influence to bribe others in order to obtain a desired outcome. David knew such behavior was displeasing to the Lord and would hinder fellowship with Him. He never wanted to be guilty of taking advantage of others financially or using his wealth to coerce others against their will. He sought to live upright and hospitably before all men.

- David sums up his thoughts with assurance that those who possess these qualities and pursue these principles for life will not be moved in their stand. Their lives have been settled in the Lord and they will abide in Him. These are simple qualities, but they deal with issues we face continually. Such activity is present in modern society. If we want to abide in Christ while being a positive witness for Him, we too must possess these qualities and practice these principles.

Conclusion: This has been a challenging passage. If you are a child of God, you have experienced His presence in a mighty way. You know the grace of God that leads to salvation through the finished work of Christ. You have been made part of the family of God. Such association bears responsibility. If we are to abide in Christ, enjoying consistent fellowship with Him, our lives must reflect the life described here.

Are you where you should be with Christ? Do you enjoy consistent fellowship with Him? Does your life reflect this passage? If not, you need to confess your need to Christ and draw nigh to Him. If you have never received Christ in salvation, I urge you to respond to the call today!