

Solid • Psalm 15

I. INTRODUCTION

A. *Epitaph*

1. Three men were sitting at lunch together, when one asked the other two -
2. "Last night I was thinking about what I would be remembered for. What do you guys want people to say about you at your funeral?"
3. He said, "I want them to say that I was a lot of fun - that I knew how to have a good time and made others happy.
4. The second man thought about it for a while then replied, "At my funeral, I want them to remember me as a good father and husband, and as someone who was very successful in business."
5. The third man said, "At my funeral, as they're all gathered round my casket, I want them to say, 'Look - he's moving!'"

B. *What Do You Want Them To Say About You?*

1. Apart from the return of Christ, we shall all go the way of all flesh - we will die
2. So - what do you want to be remembered for - what do you want them to say about you at your funeral?
3. I went to the cemetery this week and looked at the headstones to see what epitaphs had been engraved there
4. Many said, "Beloved Father & Grandfather"
 - a. some said "Querido Esposo, Padre Y Abuelito"
 - b. others said Loving Wife & Mother
 - c. only a few bore longer inscriptions
 - 1) "You are the sunshine of our lives and how we will miss those beautiful Irish eyes and smile that has no equal."
 - 2) "He never asked much in life, but he gave a true and most genuinely honest, decent, caring concern for all."
5. The majority had a simple line above the name "In Memory of . . ."
6. But as I looked at each of these headstones I found myself asking - "What memories do the survivors of those now interned in the grave have. What do they remember? What image is left in their minds?"

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7. You and I are carving the inscription on our headstones with every day that passes
 8. We are etching memories into the minds and hearts of those we meet and live with
 9. How will we be remembered?

C. *Solid!*

1. Psalm 15 presents to us the picture of someone who is solid!
 - a. someone whose feet are planted firmly in reality
 - b. and who is not shaken by the temporary setbacks of life

2. We find here the kind of person whose mere presence affects the moral and spiritual climate around them
3. This is the kind of person, that even the godless have to respect because of their integrity and inner strength

II. TEXT

A. Psalm 15

{1} LORD, who may abide in Your tabernacle? Who may dwell in Your holy hill?

{2} He who walks uprightly, And works righteousness, And speaks the truth in his heart;

{3} He who does not backbite with his tongue, Nor does evil to his neighbor, Nor does he take up a reproach against his friend;

{4} In whose eyes a vile person is despised, But he honors those who fear the LORD; He who swears to his own hurt and does not change;

{5} He who 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.

1. While the historical setting of this Psalm is not given in the superscription, most believe that David composed it as he prepared to bring the ark to Jerusalem
2. Having made Jerusalem the capital of his kingdom, David desired to centralize the worship of God there
 - a. so he constructed a tabernacle, a tent, on Mt. Zion as the new home for the ark of the covenant, the symbol of God's presence
 - b. once the tabernacle was complete, they sent to the home of Obed-Edom where the ark had been staying, and brought it to Jerusalem
3. But as David contemplated the arrival of the ark, he grew concerned
4. After all, God was holy - and the ark was the most sacred and holy religious symbol Israel possessed
5. God had already demonstrated that He was not to be trifled with when Uzzah, who had presumptuously reached out his hand to touch the ark, had been instantly flamed by God
6. David was so stunned by this, that he had stopped the ark's progress toward Jerusalem until they could find the right way to transport it and ensure no more people would be struck down
7. Psalm 15 is David's meditation on the holiness of God and the requirements for one to enter His presence

B. V. 1

{1} LORD, who may abide in Your tabernacle? Who may dwell in Your holy hill?

1. David was bringing the ark to Jerusalem so he could come before the Lord to worship
2. But now he asks, who can come before the Lord?
 - a. who can enter the tent of His presence?
 - b. who can remain on the hill where God dwells?

3. The answer is found in vs. 2-5

C. Vs. 2-5a

{2} He who walks uprightly,

1. David identifies 11 different qualifications, 11 entrance requirements
2. The first is that the one who would dwell in God's presence must *walk uprightly*
 - a. the word "upright" means to live a life of *integrity*
 - b. some translations render it as "blameless"
 - c. but in the bible, "blameless" does not mean perfection
 - d. it refers instead to a life that is lived carefully - with a heart that is focused on one thing, and that is pleasing God
 - e. the upright person isn't one who never makes mistakes,
 - f. but he or she is one who does not *purposefully* do that which displeases the Lord
3. I don't think it's a surprise if I say that there is a *crisis* of integrity today
4. What's doubly sad is that Christians, the one group of people who should exemplify integrity, have been dealt a black eye in recent years in this area
5. The moral scandal and fall of some of the more visible church leaders has revealed a lack of integrity among believers
6. While you and I may smart and hurt from the public scandals of those who are more visible, we are not responsible for their walk - they are accountable to God for their lives, as we are accountable to Him for ours
7. And we cannot cast the stones of criticism if we ourselves live in glass houses
8. Do we walk uprightly? Are we people of integrity?
 - a. do we really live in all our ways as people who have *only one* desire and priority?
 - b. to please God - to seek first His kingdom and righteousness?
 - c. or are our public and private lives two very different things?
 - d. are we the same person behind closed doors that we are at work , at the store, or in school?

And works righteousness,

9. This is the outworking of integrity
10. Integrity, if it is genuine, will produce actions that are in line with one's convictions
11. Religion that is something one merely holds as a private faith, & that is never translated into action, is no religion at all - it is a sham
12. Politicians who say they are personally against this or that but feel they have no right to enforce their beliefs on others are religious only for convenience sake
13. And their faith - so lightly held that it makes no practical difference in their lives, will not serve to help them in their time of need
14. The person who is solid - the person who can stand before God is the one who lives out his or her convictions!

And speaks the truth in his heart;

15. The NIV gives more clear expression to this phrase when it says, he "speaks the truth *from* his heart"
 - a. Jesus said, that it was out of the abundance of the heart that the mouth speaks
 - b. our words are the reflection of the inner person, of what is really going on inside us
 16. Integrity demands that there is complete harmony between our thoughts and our words
 - a. that our words do not become a cover for mixed motives & hidden agendas
 - b. that we do not gloss over our real intentions with smooth words meant to deceive
 17. I would venture to say most of us have said one thing while wanting to say something completely different
 - a. like the creep at work - who when you see him, you say, "Hi, how are you today?"
 - b. and when he says, "Oh, I'm not doing so well - I just found out I'm getting laid off."
 - c. you reply, "Really? I'm sorry to hear that."
 - d. but inwardly you are going, "YES - YES - YES!!!"
 18. Scripture says not to rejoice at the misfortune of others, while tact demands we not add to their misfortune with insensitive comments, integrity demands that we speak the truth.
 19. So one might say something like - "How unfortunate for you."
 20. The point is this: There should be a direct correlation between the words of our mouth and the meditation of our heart
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21. Verse 2 gave us 3 positive qualities of the one who is solid; verse 3 gives us 3 negatives
- {3} He who does not backbite with his tongue, Nor does evil to his neighbor, Nor does he take up a reproach against his friend;**
22. All three of these things have to do with the tongue
 - a. they look to the power of words to do evil
 - b. they speak of those who spread gossip and lies about others with the intent of doing harm
 23. The man or woman who may dwell in God's presence is one who has bridled their tongue and brought in under control
 24. James repeats this in his letter in the NT
- If any man offend not in word, the same is a perfect man, and able also to bridle the whole body. (3:2)**
- If anyone among you thinks he is religious, and does not bridle his tongue but deceives his own heart, this one's religion is useless. (1:26)**
25. Children on the playground respond to name calling with the time-worn reply,

*Stick and stones may break my bones
But names will never hurt me*
 26. While said with great bluster and force, it simply isn't true
 - a. the wounds from sticks and stone will heal

- b. but the wounds of weapon-words often do not
- 27. God knows this, and looks with grave displeasure on gossip and slander
- 28. Of the 7 things God considers an abomination in Proverbs 6, 3 of them have to do with our speech: A lying tongue, A false witness who speaks lies, And one who sows discord among brethren.
- 29. While most people would never give any thought to murder - they think nothing of assassinating someone else's reputation with slander and gossip
- 30. But the solid person, the one who can abide in God's presence is the one whose tongue is not given to character assassination
- 31. The damage done by gossip simply cannot be estimated!
 - a. in my experience, it is the number one cause of turmoil in the Church
 - b. I have seen it split churches, destroy good relationships, and devastate lives
- 32. Mary Livingstone, the wife of the great missionary pioneer, David Livingstone, died as a result of gossip
 - a. David, who had a passionate zeal to take the gospel to those who had never heard it,
 - b. grew impatient with the why missions in Africa were being done
 - c. the missionaries tended to stay all clumped together along the coast, living in their safe and secure missionary compounds - more like colonists than pioneers
 - d. Livingstone, launched out and went deep into the African interior
 - e. but because travel was so arduous , he was gone for years at a time
 - f. in order for him to travel more quickly and easily, David left Mary and the children at the coastal mission base
 - g. people began to talk - saying that he had left her behind because she was a shrew and he was merely trying to get away from her
 - h. this was utterly absurd - they loved one another deeply
 - i. but the passion to win souls was something they both shared and they set their own desires aside so that the lost of Africa might be saved
 - j. after several years of gossip, Mary could take it no more and demanded that David take her with him on his next trip into the interior
 - k. discovering the real cause of her request, he consented
 - l. shortly after they ventured into the interior, because she demanded she remain with him in order to silence the gossips, she contracted river fever, and died in 4 days.
 - m. all because of the lying gossip of some petty and jealous egos!
- 33. Gossip is such a strong temptation to enter in to
 - a. it is such an enticement to share some juicy little tidbit on someone
 - b. when we overhear someone digging dirt on another, it's almost as if our ear bends to catch every word
 - c. when we meet those who consciously *refuse* to participate in gossip, they seem to stand out in bold relief because they are unusual
- 34. Harold St. John was just such a man:
 - a. a group of young men once began to discuss another man who had been causing a great deal of trouble
 - b. St. John remained silent - so the others asked him what he thought
 - c. Harold replied, "What do I think of brother So-and so? I think he has a

- perfectly charming wife!"
- d. at another time, when the conversation drifted to a different controversy and those who were causing it, St. John spoke out,
 - e. "I have heard that some of these men have been much used of the Lord in evangelistic work in days gone by and were a great help to the saints of God. Shall we bow our heads in prayer."
35. May we find the courage and wisdom to follow Harold St. John's good example!

{4} In whose eyes a vile person is despised, But he honors those who fear the LORD;

36. Not only does the solid person show personal integrity and control, but he or she demands it of others!
37. The moral rules that govern one life are not merely an issue of personal conviction; they flow from a holy God and so - govern all
38. So, the solid person is one who shows no honor, no respect, gives no value to - those who are vile
39. Now, that is not to say that we hate them, or disrespect them as human beings
- a. but it does mean that we do not exalt those who practice a vile and godless lifestyle
 - b. we do not make heroes of those who are ignoble
 - c. certainly it is a sign of the times that those who have captured the public limelight are those who live the vilest lives
 - 1) whether it's a tattooed, orange-haired basketball player who enjoys wearing women's clothes
 - 2) or a pop-singer who seems to delight in taking everything holy and sacred and turning it into something she can twist and distort into perversion
 - d. it is the vile who have climbed the ladder of financial success and popularity
 - e. while the good and godly, while those who fear the Lord, are defamed, ridiculed and made to look like fools
40. It may not be popular to despise the vile and honor those who fear the Lord - but it is right!
41. Friends, let's be careful who we heap praise on!
- a. let's exercise caution and discretion in whom we seek to emulate and follow after
 - b. let's not allow our ideas of fashion and culture to be drawn from the vile
 - c. from those who have not only rejected God but actively work to defame Him by debasing His creation
42. Let our heroes be those who live quiet but righteous lives - living not for the praise of man but God
- a. let our heroes and heroines be those who give their lives to the service of the downtrodden
 - b. those who stand for truth and justice when it seems all the world is against them
 - c. who fear God rather than man!

He who swears to his own hurt and does not change;

43. Speaking of integrity - what about those who keep their word, even when keeping their word costs them unseen expense?
- we live in the age of the oath-breaker!
 - our courts are filled with litigation because people do not keep their word
 - whether it is divorce, or the breaking of a business agreement - people do not seem to be able to make good on their promises
 - they think nothing of signing a contract, but as soon as the agreement costs them something, they want to bail
44. We've run in to this in our attempt to book a musical guest for the Christmas concert last year
- there were two separate artists we had made arrangements with, one after the other
 - both of them backed out after giving us initial acceptance
 - with the second, we had even sent in the deposit and all the arrangements were set
 - but then we got a call that this artist backed out because they had a better offer elsewhere, *weeks after our date was confirmed!*
 - in speaking with the booking agent, I expressed my dismay and said that I expected more integrity from those in Christian music.
 - his reply? "Let's not use the word integrity in the same sentence with the Christian music scene."
 - he did go on to name a few groups and artists who maintained their integrity despite their success
 - he spoke of one man with great admiration
 - this singer had just scored huge success with a song that had climbed to the top of the secular charts
 - overnight he went from booking concerts for \$1500 to \$10,000, and sometimes \$15,000
 - but he had told the booking agency that he would not cancel a single one of the concerts he already had booked at the lower rates!
 - that is precisely what it means to swear to one's own hurt and not change
45. Let your "Yes" be yes and your "No," no

{5a} He who does not put out his money at usury, Nor does he take a bribe against the innocent.

46. The man or woman who is solid, the one who is able to dwell in the Lord's presence, is the one who does not take advantage of others' misfortune
47. We can only rightly understand this when we see it against its historical backdrop
- they did not have the legal option of bankruptcy in the ancient world
 - if you fell into debt and could not repay your creditors, you and your family were sold into slavery
48. Usury was high interest - which in the ancient middle east might be as much as 50%!
- in the law, God had forbade the charging of usury
 - this would only serve to further the debt of the poor - making his state worse

- c. so it was prohibited
 - d. God wanted the people to see that indeed, contrary to Cain's objection - they were each other's keeper
49. Because of greed, some of the rich and powerful have always attempted to hide behind the law as a way of dishonest gain
 - a. through bribes and well placed payments, they seek to grease the wheels of justice to run in their track
 - b. the poor, who don't possess the means to defend themselves, find themselves the victims of the unscrupulous rich and unjust but greedy courts
 50. The symbol of justice is a blindfolded woman who holds a pair of scales
 - a. the blindfold is supposed to mean Lady Justice shows no favoritism
 - b. but it seems that it speaks more of the fact that she is blind to justice itself - it is money that has blinded her
 51. The one who is solid, the one who abides in God's presence is the one whose integrity guards him from allowing the promise of personal financial gain to distort justice
 52. He or she does what is right because it is right because God says so

III. CONCLUSION

A. V. 5b

He who does these things shall never be moved.

1. At the conclusion of the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus said, {Mat 7:24-27}
 - {24} **“Whoever hears these sayings of Mine, and does them, I will liken him to a wise man who built his house on the rock:**
 - {25} **“and the rain descended, the floods came, and the winds blew and beat on that house; and it did not fall, for it was founded on the rock.**
 - {26} **“But everyone who hears these sayings of Mine, and does not do them, will be like a foolish man who built his house on the sand:**
 - {27} **“and the rain descended, the floods came, and the winds blew and beat on that house; and it fell. And great was its fall.”**
2. No matter who you are, no matter how privileged your life, there will be storms that will batter and buffet you
3. How you come through them is determined by what you've built your life on
4. If you've built it on self, on your wisdom and experience, that will prove an unreliable foundation
5. If you've built it on the wisdom of this world, that too will prove itself to be poor ground
6. But if you've built your life on the Rock of God's word, the storms will come and go and find you none the worse for wear

B. Problem

1. But we are confronted with a problem as we look at the qualifications David gives in this Psalm

2. The problem is - not one of us can meet them
 - a. none of us walks in perfect integrity
 - b. none of us has a perfect bridle on his or her tongue
 - c. none of us is perfectly just
3. If these are the entrance requirements to abide in God's presence, then the gate is closed and none may pass
4. There is only one who has lived these things out perfectly - Jesus
5. He is the only one who may dwell in God's holy hill
6. Thus, it is only as we are found IN HIM by faith that WE can dwell with God
7. And if we are IN HIM by faith, then He indwells us by grace
8. And all the virtues we find in Psalm 15 will be progressively worked out in us
9. Make no mistake - the faith that *saves* us from sin, also *removes* that sin & replaces it with *virtue*
10. Might it not be a good idea to use this list of 11 things as a spiritual dipstick to see how deep your faith in Jesus has taken you?