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Psalm 15

Introduction – Who can live with God in His home? Who can be considered a friend of God? This kind of question shows up in various forms (Psalm 24:3, Acts 16:30, 22:10, Luke 18:18, John 6:28, Acts 2:37). The question is set up like a simple catechism question and the answer given is first general and then more practical and particular. The man who desires to dwell with God must desire to dwell in the attributes of God's character. This is the nature of union with Christ, of covenant with God, of loyal love in and to the Triune God.

Features – The psalm-singer meditates on a program of life to be followed, but not a list of rules separate from the union that exists. There is also an inference that man is supposed to end up somewhere other than where he is now, and that the direction is upward, ascending. The place is one of rest, but arriving there requires a process of climbing. *"...we have here a description of the man who is a child at home in the Church of God on earth, and who will dwell in the house of the Lord for ever above. He is primarily Jesus, the perfect man, and in Him all who through grace are conformed to His image"* – Spurgeon.

Who May Dwell Here? (vv2-5) – There are several possibilities for grouping the answers to the question of verse 1. I am indebted to Dr. Boice in pointing out the Hebrew parallelism that does not quite follow the versification.

Loyal Character – *"He who does uprightly and works righteousness..."* Uprightly is not referring to sinless perfection; the Hebrew word points to wholeness, soundness, and consistent integrity. Flowing out of that upright character are faithful works. Jesus expresses the same idea as a person who feeds the hungry, welcomes the downcast, and cares for the sick (Matt 25:34-39). In Jesus' parable you can see that the righteous did not have a checklist they were following; grace had transformed them and their community. Like the Greatest Commandment, we are not to obey God, but rather to love the Lord OUR God with all of our strength. Loyal love.

Loyal Speech – *"Who speaks the truth in his heart and has no slander on his lips..."* He is known as trustworthy because he speaks the truth even when no one else is listening. He is trustworthy with other's reputation because he refuses to slander or backbite with his tongue. Loyal love.

Loyal Conduct – *"Who does no evil to his neighbor, nor does he take up a reproach against his friend..."* This man is no coward. When Jesus answered the question "who is my neighbor," the answer identified the cowards; the priest and the Levite were afraid of ridicule if they defiled themselves by helping someone under them (Luke 10:19ff). Like Jesus, we are to be more interested in getting someone else clean than in getting ourselves dirty. As was said before, this man does not slander; but he also refuses to put up with the slander that may come up against his friend. Not to have started the gossip is no defense at all. Paul says that failure to reprove sin in your presence is the same as fellowshiping with it (Eph 5:11). Slander ought to bring forth our angry countenance like the north wind brings forth rain (Prov 25:23). Loyal love.

Loyal Values – *"In whose eyes a vile person is despised, but he honors those who fear the Lord..."* To stay with the same examples, the slandered are to be protected and the slanderer is to be openly despised. We are tempted to do just the opposite. The slanderer/gossip is often the one with some form of community power; that is why he or she can get away with saying that sort of thing. One bumper sticker reads, *"You don't see much in a small town, but what you hear about makes up for it."* The same goes for small, conservative, Christian churches and denominations. In addition, when any kind of vileness has been determined to be cool and in-style, it is to be openly mocked. On the other hand, your public honor is to be demonstrated towards those who stand with God. Loyal love.

Loyal to His Word – *"He who swears to his own hurt and does not change..."* God is loyal to His Word and the psalm-singer says that God approves of those who are like Him in this as well. The upright man shows more regard for his promises than his own interest, even if it will hurt him to do so. Business contracts, personal promises, and wedding vows all come to mind. Loyal love.

Loyal with His Wallet – *"He who does not put out his money at usury, nor does he take a bribe against the innocent..."* This ties in to all that was said before. With money it is especially tempting to not be truthful, to take advantage of other people, and to suspend moral standards towards others. Positions of power are given to us that we might imitate Jesus and serve, not lord it over at the expense of others. Loyal love.

"He who does these things shall never be moved." First of all to summarize, the one who shall abide in God's house are His children, those who look like Him (John 8:42-44). They share His loyal, covenant love. Why is it that they shall never be moved? It is not because of their inherent righteousness. It is because they stand with THEIR God in covenant with Him. They will stand on Zion because they are united to Zion. They will stand on Zion because they are like Zion. They will dwell in the tabernacle of God because they are the tabernacle of God.

Loyal love. Now that is something to sing about.

"He who says he abides in Him ought himself also to walk just as He walked" – 1 John 2:6

Everyone falls short when it comes to following the psalm (the list). Don't turn to the list (the psalm) to change. Don't turn to just any psalm-singer (like yourself, for instance) to change. Jesus sang this psalm, and He sings it with all who are united to Him. Turn to the Psalm-singer – and sing.

Dave Hatcher – September 9, 2007

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