

Lord, who shall abide in thy tabernacle?

Some people do not know that conversion to the Christian faith is only the first step in the ladder of salvation. To continue to climb the ladder, one must be relentless in putting away all vestiges of one's sinful past, in order to live the new life in Christ. It is important therefore that those who are sincerely desirous of life eternal should know what to do and the things to avoid in order to inherit God's Kingdom.

It is on this score that David the prophet posed the question as stated in Psalm 15 verse 1, to wit: "Lord, who shall abide in thy tabernacle? who shall dwell in thy holy hill?". The Lord in the passage refers to God Almighty while the words tabernacle and hill, as used in this context stand for God's organization..

By reason of the questions asked by David the prophet one could infer that though God calls people of every category to come into His Kingdom, yet it is not every one that would remain to enjoy His blessings and get salvation in the end. St. Peter gave expression to this point after hearing how Cornelius, though a gentile, was called to be an apostle when he said: "Of a truth I perceive that God is no respecter of persons: But in every nation he that feareth him, and worketh righteousness, is accepted with him." (Acts 10:34, 35; see also John 9:31) It is in God's Organisation, the true Church, now set up in these last days, that His worshippers are taught the fear of God and instructed in the way of righteousness so as to become peculiar people who are prepared and, in the end, qualified to inherit the Kingdom. Such a people are able to testify to His name and carry out His commandments and be an example of right conduct to others. They vindicate the name of God on earth and give the lie to the devil's boast that no one will continue in God's service when faced with adversity.

Qualities

The prophet David went on to give answers to the questions he raised by highlighting the qualities that will enable one to remain in the way of God until the end when he stated: "He that walketh uprightly, and worketh righteousness, and speaketh the truth in his heart. He that backbiteth not with his tongue, nor doeth evil to his neighbour, nor taketh up a reproach against his neighbour. In whose eyes a vile person is condemned; but he honoureth them that fear the LORD. He that sweareth to his own hurt, and changeth not. He that putteth not out his money to usury, nor taketh reward against the innocent. He that doeth these things shall never be moved." – Psalm 15:1-5.

Let us x-ray these points one after the other. The person who will abide in the way of God is, to begin with, the one "that walketh uprightly, and worketh righteousness..."

Those who walk uprightly are known as the meek. This means that they are humble or lowly in heart and do not esteem themselves above what they really are. (Romans 12: 3) An example of such upright people was the man Nathaniel, whom Jesus Christ called "an Israelite indeed, in whom is no guile!". -John 1:47.

The fact is that merely accepting that God exists or that Christ is the Son of God does not make one a true worshipper of God. Satan the Devil believes in God and trembles. (James 2:19) If one believes in God and Christ, such one must prove his belief or faith by his actions. Such a person must then walk uprightly and do works of righteousness. Apostle James stated, "What doth it profit, my brethren, though a man say he hath faith, and have not works? can faith save him?" (James 2:14) He answered this question in verse 24 that it is "by works a man is justified, and not by faith only". If a man knows and really believes the truth he will be for the Lord completely and not serve the Devil and his agents part of the time and at the same time claim to be a Christian. Mixed worship or interfaith is wrong as it amounts to serving two masters. No true Christian will lean to individual opinions or do what is right in his own eyes. – Deuteronomy 12:8; Proverbs 3:5-7; Matthew 6:24; 1 Corinthians 10:21.

The next quality highlighted by the prophet is that the person must be one that "...speaketh the truth in his heart". Christians should speak the truth always, whether they are talking about God and His Kingdom or to one another. God declared through His prophet Zechariah "These are the things that ye shall do; Speak ye every man the truth to his neighbour; execute the judgment of truth and peace in your gates: And let none of you imagine evil in your hearts against his neighbour; and love no false oath: for all these are things that I hate, saith the LORD." (Zechariah 8:16, 17) Also Apostle Paul stated in his letter to the Christians at Ephesus thus: "Wherefore putting away lying, speak every man truth with his neighbour: for we are members one of another." (Ephesians 4:25) Anyone who is determined to do the righteousness of God will not lie; he will be plain in his dealings. A good heart condition is vital in the service of God, because the heart is the source of motive. That is why Jesus Christ said it is what comes from the heart that defiles the man. – Matthew 15:15-20.

Continuing, King David stated that the true worshipper is the one "that backbiteth not with his tongue, nor doeth evil to his neighbour, nor taketh up a reproach against his neighbour". The word backbite means "to make spiteful or slanderous comments about somebody who is not present". This is very bad. King David, under inspiration of God warned: "Whoso privily slandereth his neighbour, him will I cut off: him that hath an high look and a proud heart will not I suffer" (Psalm 101:5) And St. Paul said that we should "speak evil of no man..." (Titus 3:2) Moreover, the prophet David stated: "What man is he that desireth life, and loveth many days, that he may see good? Keep thy tongue from evil, and thy lips from speaking guile. Depart from evil, and do good; seek peace, and pursue it." -Psalm 34:12-14.

King David stated further that the true believer is the one "In whose eyes a vile person is condemned; but he honoureth them that fear the Lord." The New King James Version renders the text thus: "In whose eyes a vile person is despised, But he honors those who fear the LORD." The truth is that the upright will not exalt those who hate righteousness. The wicked are vile in the sight of God and in the eyes of His people, that was why King David stated: "Do not I hate them, O LORD, that hate thee? and am not I grieved with those that rise up against thee? I hate them with perfect hatred: I count them mine enemies." (Psalm 139:21, 22) Of course, David the prophet did not by this mean that he hated their persons but their character or conduct. If such perverted persons change, then he would be at peace with them. King Solomon rightly observed: "An unjust man is an abomination to the just: and he that is upright in the way is abomination to the wicked." (Proverbs 29:27) It is the wide gulf between righteousness and unrighteousness that informed the statement of James the apostle that friendship with the world (that is, the ungodly,) is enmity with God. – James 4:4; See also 1 John 2:15-17.

But true Christians honour those who fear God. They like to be with them, to discuss with them so that they may draw encouragement from each other and be strengthened thereby. That was why King Solomon declared that as "Iron sharpeneth iron; so a man sharpeneth the countenance of his friend". (Proverbs 27:17) Such ones gladly give moral, physical and material support to the ministers of the gospel as did Ebedmelech, an Ethiopian eunuch, who supported and helped Jeremiah in his tribulations and was, for that reason, delivered from death. Concerning the eunuch God Almighty stated: "...For I will surely deliver thee, and thou shalt not fall by the sword, but thy life shall be for a prey unto thee: because thou hast put thy trust in me, saith the LORD." – Jeremiah 39:15-18. See also Galatians 6:10; Hebrews 13:7, 17.

Another important quality of a true worshipper of God is that he is one "that sweareth to his own hurt, and changeth not". It should be pointed out, however, that with the coming of Jesus Christ, swearing was done away with. In the Christian era, our answer should simply be either "yes" or "no". (Matthew 5:33-37) And since we should be taken by our word, then there is no need for us to swear. Those who say one thing and do the opposite are mere pretenders. (Psalm 26:24, 25; 62:4; 55:21) Another point to note is that the vow of every Christian, as did David, is to serve God in His organization all the days of his life. This vow should be kept without wavering. King David

stated: "One thing have I desired of the LORD, that will I seek after; that I may dwell in the house of the LORD all the days of my life, to behold the beauty of the LORD, and to enquire in his temple." (Psalm 27:4) He further affirmed his determination to serve God in His Kingdom when he stated: "For a day in thy courts is better than a thousand. I had rather be a doorkeeper in the house of my God, than to dwell in the tents of wickedness." (Psalm 84:10) Knowing fully well that the devil is bitterly opposed to those who are given to the true worship of God, the Christian should remain faithful to His vow though he suffers reproach and persecutions along the way. Jesus Christ said: "Whosoever therefore shall be ashamed of me and of my words in this adulterous and sinful generation; of him also shall the Son of man be ashamed, when he cometh in the glory of his Father with the holy angels." (Mark 8:38) St. Paul had this understanding and that was why he carried on despite fiery opposition as he declared: "For therefore we both labour and suffer reproach, because we trust in the living God, who is the Saviour of all men, specially of those that believe." (1 Timothy 4:10) By the grace of God, nothing should separate the Christian from the love of Christ. – Romans 8:35-38.

Writing further on the qualifications for true discipleship, King David stated that the believer should have sympathy on his fellow believer who is in financial distress and so should not put out "his money to usury". The law of God allowed the natural Jews to charge interest for loans given to foreigners. But they were forbidden to receive it from each other. (Deuteronomy 23:19, 20, Exodus 22:25) In the time of Nehemiah the governor he rebuked the rich Jews for exacting usury from their poor brethren and made them to return what they had unjustly taken from them. The law against usury was given by God to help the poor among the Jews so that they would not be taken advantage of and exploited. One should therefore be generous and helpful to the needy. See James 2:14-17; 5:1-6; 1 John 3:17, 18; Nehemiah 5:6-12.

It is well known that there are many people today who, in their craze for money, position and power, take "reward against the innocent", contrary to the law of God, just because they feel such ones are helpless. Many people today think of nothing else but to pervert justice, oppress their fellowmen, and even commit murder because of gain or hope of it. When people call evil good and good evil, when they put light for darkness and darkness for light, when they utter bare-faced lies and insist it is the truth, (Isaiah 5:20), one should know, such people have been taken captive of by the devil. God Almighty pronounced woe on people who "justify the wicked for reward, and take away the righteousness of the righteous from him!". – Isaiah 5:23

The Christian does not indulge in oppression, but deals honorably and justly. God declared through His servant Moses: "Keep thee far from a false matter; and the innocent and righteous slay thou not: for I will not justify the wicked." (Exodus 23:7) In view of the fact that it is through bribery people tend to become prejudiced against the cause of justice, the Bible says: "And thou shalt take no gift: for the gift blindeth the wise, and perverteth the words of the righteous." (Exodus 23: 8; see also Deuteronomy 16:19) All the people of God should avoid "the gain of oppressions" and keep their hands away from the "holding of bribes" (Isaiah 33:15) Any land where bribery is the norm will be characterized by distress, disharmony and violence. (Compare Micah 7:3) One would recall that Judas Iscariot took a reward to betray Jesus Christ. – Matthew 26:15; 27:3-5.

A question similar to that stated in Psalm 15 verse 1 is asked in Psalm 24 verse 3 which says: "Who shall ascend into the hill of the Lord? or who shall stand in his holy place?" Again the prophet answers the question: "He that hath clean hands, and a pure heart; who hath not lifted up his soul unto vanity, nor sworn deceitfully. He shall receive the blessing from the LORD, and righteousness from the God of his salvation." – Psalm 24:4, 5.

In other words, the true disciple must refrain from doing things that are contrary to will of God: his motives should be pure and right and in harmony with God's law; such one would avoid the worship of idols, or anything that compromises his faith; and he would not lie in the name of God. It is those ones that would abide in God's organization. But those who out of

carelessness, self-will or stubbornness persist in their evil ways, will be gathered out of God's organization or Kingdom in His due time. Matthew 13:41-43, 47-50; Revelation 21:8; Isaiah 35:8.

Love

To meet the conditions needed for one to be upright and righteous before God, one must have the love of God and of one's neighbour. In Romans 13:9,10 St. Paul stated: "For this, Thou shalt not commit adultery, Thou shalt not kill, Thou shalt not steal, Thou shalt not bear false witness, Thou shalt not covet; and if there be any other commandment, it is briefly comprehended in this saying, namely, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. Love worketh no ill to his neighbour: therefore love is the fulfilling of the law." Love is the expression of unselfishness, in that the person puts the interest of God and his fellow man above his personal desires. One is thus able to avoid breaking the laws of God.

Just as Abraham did righteousness and was called the friend of God, so God Almighty and His son Jesus Christ will be the friends of all those who love to do Their will, having understood Their mind for them. (Proverbs 22:11; John 15:13, 14; James 2:21-23) Such ones will remain in God's Organisation until the end and will be given salvation by the grace of God as David the prophet prayed: "Oh send out thy light and thy truth; Let them lead me: Let them bring me unto thy holy hill, And to thy tabernacles. Then will I go unto the altar of God, Unto God my exceeding joy; And upon the harp will I praise thee, O God, my God." – Psalm 43:3, 4.