

Remembering Howard
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Psa 15:1 (BHS)

מִזְמוֹר לְדָוִד
יְהוָה מִי־יֵגֹר בְּאֹהֶלֶךָ
מִי־יִשְׁכֵן בְּהַר קֹדֶשְׁךָ:

Psa 15:0 – 1 (NIV)

A psalm of David.
LORD, who may **dwell** in your **sacred** tent?
Who may **live** on your **holy** mountain?

“David” is clearly identifiable. Note that verse 0 in English is part of verse 1 in Hebrew. “Dwell” is a gloss of *gur*, usually meaning “sojourn.” “Tent” is from *’ohel*; context provides “sacred.” “Live” is from *shakan*, “to dwell.” “Mountain” is from *har* as in Ar-mageddon. “Holy” is from *qedesh*, like the city of Kadesh.

Go ahead and read all of psalm 15. Think of Howard as you do.

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Psalm 15 begins by asking who will sojourn in Yahweh’s tent, on the holy mountain of God. There is a simple answer: those with an irreproachable life (v2). The one ready to stand before God lives and speaks only the truth.

Personally, I have met no one who is more a lover of truth than Howard. He devoted his life to making sure the Word was faithfully preached in the EPC. This is the sort of heart the psalmist commends as fit for God’s sanctuary.

But verse three negatively describes what they are not like. They do not besmirch with their tongue. Their hearts do not lift up against others. Again, this reminds me of Howard. What he did, was help churches. What he spoke, was the gospel.

But he did have critical words to say about some people though—and this takes us to verse four. Verse four talks about how the righteous one *sees*. The idiom is, “in his eyes the reprobate is despised.” He looks at the world with righteous indignation toward those who undermine faith in the Lord. But he honors (or, “glorifies”) those who revere Yahweh. He is discriminating.

The only people I ever heard Howard ridicule were the wolves in sheep’s clothing, apostates who undermine people’s faith, or who were wishy-washy about sound doctrine. He had no tolerance for them.

This psalm concentrates on the horizontal, not the vertical—how we treat our fellows, not how we perform religious duties. It teaches that to draw close to God you must be equitable in your dealings with others. The Hebrew says, “He swears to his own hurt, he does not change.” Such a one is trustworthy, dependable. These people can come before the throne of God boldly.

This also reminds me of Howard, who powered through the business of the church even in poor health and when needing rest. Yes—Howard kept to his commitments, even when it hurt. The psalm concludes: the one who does these things will never be shaken.

Psalm 15 has a very modest goal. All it does is set the standard. It establishes the type of person who is ready for eternity. It says no more and leaves us to ponder how we measure up.

If you were closely scrutinized, would you be embarrassed? Just under the surface, is a sinful heart waiting to be expressed? It is disturbingly easy for lust or covetousness or selfishness to arise in our thoughts, isn’t it?

How do you use your tongue? Or, how onerous does a task have to be before you start finding excuses to get out of a commitment? How does money—or the shortage of it—make you feel? How generous are you with it (v5)? When I am honest I must admit that I don't measure up to the standard of psalm 15—and perhaps you feel that you do not either.

In fact, there really is only one person who does. I'm sure Howard would agree that this psalm is really only about Jesus. He is the one who spoke the truth, who was blameless, never wavering from his calling, never slandering, who did no harm. But Jesus certainly did despise religious leaders who took advantage. He called down woes on those hypocrites.

Psalm 15 says that he swears to his own hurt and does not change. He sticks by his commitment even against his own interests. Jesus suffered the ultimate harm rather than waver. Being faithful until death, he rose again and, according to verse 5b, is now established forever.

You and I are not yet what we are meant to be, but God sticks with us for Jesus' sake. The Spirit continues to make us more and more into a psalm 15 person. Someday your life will look like that. Won't it be great?

Howard is now forever established with Jesus. And this is where you are headed as you walk faithfully with him. We press on to the glorious day, when we will meet him too. Amen, Come Lord Jesus!