

Psalms 15:2

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

He that walketh uprightly, and worketh righteousness, and speaketh the truth in his heart.

Analysis

He that walketh uprightly, and worketh righteousness, and speaketh the truth in his heart. After posing the question "Who shall dwell with God?" this verse begins the answer with three comprehensive categories: conduct (walking), action (working), and inner character (speaking truth in the heart).

"Walketh uprightly" (הוֹלֶךְ תָּמִימָן/holekh tamim) uses tamim, meaning complete, whole, blameless, having integrity. The participle form indicates continuous action: "the one who is walking." Walk represents one's entire lifestyle—the habitual direction and pattern of life. Genesis 17:1 records God commanding Abraham: "Walk before me, and be thou perfect [tamim]." This isn't sinless perfection but wholehearted devotion, undivided loyalty, integrated character matching profession.

"Worketh righteousness" (פְּעַל צְדָקָה/po'el tzedeq) adds active dimension. Tzedeq means righteousness, justice, rightness. This person doesn't merely avoid evil but actively practices good. Faith without works is dead (James 2:17)—authentic righteousness produces righteous deeds. The verb form indicates ongoing activity: habitually working righteousness, consistently practicing justice.

"Speaketh the truth in his heart" (דָּבַר אֶמֶת בְּלֶבֶבוֹ/dover emet bilevavo) penetrates beneath external behavior to internal reality. Emet means truth, faithfulness, reliability. "In his heart" locates truth-speaking not merely in external words but in inner conviction. This person's speech originates from truthful heart—no duplicity,

pretense, or inner contradiction between belief and profession.

The progression moves from general lifestyle (walking) to specific actions (working) to inner reality (heart truth). True fitness for God's presence requires external conduct flowing from internal integrity. Jesus condemned Pharisees whose external religiosity masked inner corruption (Matthew 23:27-28). God desires truth in the inward parts (Psalm 51:6).

This verse establishes the foundation—comprehensive integrity in being (walking), doing (working), and speaking (truth from the heart). The following verses will elaborate specific applications of these principles.

Historical Context

David's life provides context for this psalm's emphasis on integrity. Despite his serious moral failures (Bathsheba, Uriah), David demonstrated authentic repentance and heart-level honesty with God. His prayer in Psalm 51:6 acknowledges: "Behold, thou desirest truth in the inward parts." David understood that external religious observance without internal integrity was worthless.

The Hebrew concept of tamim (uprightness, integrity) appears throughout Scripture as God's standard. Noah was tamim (Genesis 6:9), Job was tam (Job 1:1), and God Himself is tamim in His way (Psalm 18:30). This isn't sinless perfection but wholehearted devotion and consistency between profession and practice.

Ancient Near Eastern cultures valued honor and shame, making reputation paramount. However, biblical ethics emphasized internal reality over external appearance. While surrounding cultures focused on saving face, Israel's prophets condemned those who appeared righteous while harboring corrupt hearts. Jeremiah 17:9-10 warns: "The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked: who can know it? I the LORD search the heart."

In Second Temple Judaism, this psalm's ethics informed Pharisaic teaching, though some Pharisees fell into the trap of external compliance without internal transformation—the very hypocrisy Jesus confronted. The Essene community at

Qumran (who produced the Dead Sea Scrolls) emphasized ethical purity and internal integrity, partly in reaction to perceived temple corruption.

For Christians, this verse raises the question: Can anyone meet these standards? Paul's teaching in Romans 3:10-18 declares none are righteous, forcing reliance on Christ's righteousness. Yet Jesus's Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 5-7) similarly emphasizes internal integrity—not merely external rule-keeping but heart-level transformation. The Christian life produces the character described here not through self-effort but through Spirit-empowered transformation (Galatians 5:22-23).

Related Passages

John 15:13 — Greatest form of love

1 Corinthians 13:4 — Characteristics of love

Study Questions

1. What is the difference between occasional righteous acts and 'walking uprightly' as a lifestyle pattern?
2. How does 'speaking truth in your heart' differ from merely speaking truthful words, and why does God prioritize internal integrity?
3. In what areas might you maintain external religious observance while lacking internal integrity, and how does this verse challenge such duplicity?
4. How does Christ's righteousness credited to believers relate to the call to 'work righteousness' in daily life?
5. What practical steps can help align your inner convictions (heart truth) with your outer conduct (walking and working)?

Interlinear Text

הָולֶךְ	מִימִים	וְפָעַל	צַדָּקָה	וְדִבֶּר	אַתָּה
He that walketh	uprightly	and worketh	righteousness	and speaketh	the truth
H1980	H8549	H6466	H6664	H1696	H571

בְּלִבְבּוֹן

in his heart

H3824

Additional Cross-References

Proverbs 28:18 (Parallel theme): Whoso walketh uprightly shall be saved: but he that is perverse in his ways shall fall at once.

Ephesians 4:25 (Truth): Wherefore putting away lying, speak every man truth with his neighbour: for we are members one of another.

Colossians 3:9 (Parallel theme): Lie not one to another, seeing that ye have put off the old man with his deeds;

1 John 3:7 (Righteousness): Little children, let no man deceive you: he that doeth righteousness is righteous, even as he is righteous.

Psalms 24:4 (Parallel theme): He that hath clean hands, and a pure heart; who hath not lifted up his soul unto vanity, nor sworn deceitfully.

1 John 2:6 (Parallel theme): He that saith he abideth in him ought himself also so to walk, even as he walked.

Hebrews 11:33 (Righteousness): Who through faith subdued kingdoms, wrought righteousness, obtained promises, stopped the mouths of lions,

Isaiah 33:15 (Righteousness): He that walketh righteously, and speaketh uprightly; he that despiseth the gain of oppressions, that shaketh his hands from holding of bribes, that stoppeth his ears from hearing of blood, and shutteth his eyes from seeing evil;

Acts 10:35 (Righteousness): But in every nation he that feareth him, and worketh righteousness, is accepted with him.

Ephesians 2:10 (Parallel theme): For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them.

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