

DAY TWENTY-FIVE

“CHARACTER CHANGES”

PSALM 15:1-5

Today is one of those times for me, when you reflect on some Scripture passages that have had a sizeable impact in your life—guiding your thoughts and your personal approach to issues. Hopefully, we can all remember certain situations in our walk with the Lord when His Word was used to convict us of inappropriate actions we were making, effecting proper course correction. Certainly for those who are diligently seeking to abide with Him, many of you can identify with this sentiment as we come to the halfway point on our sojourn to the Feast of Weeks. Before we turn to character issues that reflect the heart of our Creator, please take the time to lift up your voice to proclaim His faithfulness and mercies that are new each morning (Lamentations 3:23):

PSALM 67:1-7

For the choir director; with stringed instruments. A Psalm. A Song. God be gracious to us and bless us, *and* cause His face to shine upon us—Selah. That Your way may be known on the earth, Your salvation among all nations. Let the peoples praise You, O God; let all the peoples praise You. Let the nations be glad and sing for joy; for You will judge the peoples with uprightness and guide the nations on the earth. Selah. Let the peoples praise You, O God; let all the peoples praise You. The earth has yielded its produce; God, our God, blesses us. God blesses us, that all the ends of the earth may fear Him.

PSALM 15:1-5

A Psalm of David. O LORD, who may abide in Your tent? Who may dwell on Your holy hill? He who walks with integrity, and works righteousness, and speaks truth in his heart. He does not slander with his tongue, nor does evil to his neighbor, nor takes up a reproach against his friend; in whose eyes a reprobate is despised, but who honors those who fear the LORD; he swears to his own hurt and does not change; He does not put out his money at interest, nor does he take a bribe against the innocent. He who does these things will never be shaken.

This is one of those mornings that caused my soul to reconsider the faithfulness of our Creator. After our meditation yesterday, when some issues of the heart were examined through honest confession and repentance, a new focus on character traits has revived me.

COUNTING THE OMER

The inclusion of Psalm 15 has restored my spirit, by reminding me of the power of His Word to alter life direction and choices. Let me explain.

Have you ever been in a situation where the Word of God has been used to literally change the course of your life? If you have, then you will *never* forget it, because you have made a decision by faith guided by the truth of the Scriptures. As I got to v. 4 in this Psalm, reading, **“He swears to his own hurt and does not change,”** my heart quickened. Years ago, this very statement was used by God to change the road I was to travel, directing our family to make some decisions which eventually led us into full time ministry.

My Earthly father did an excellent job of exemplifying many of the character traits that are spoken of in this Psalm. As a Naval Academy graduate and Navy aviator, he served and lived by the “Laws of the Navy,” and the uniform code of military justice and other creeds that were largely rooted in the Holy Scriptures and in Christian philosophy. Even though he does not currently profess having a “born again” experience with the Lord Jesus, my father is a man who walks with integrity, honesty, forthrightness, self-discipline, and sincerity—all without any slander or malice toward anyone. *He is the quintessential example of who the loyal, ideal American is to be.* During my childhood, I was modeled many of the qualities that a godly person is expected to have as a result of their relationship with the Lord. Foundationally speaking, I was greatly blessed with a role model who molded my personality and my ethics, prior to my conversion of faith.

Of course, after coming to a saving relationship with Yeshua and being indwelt with the Holy Spirit, I began to have a much more meaningful code in the Holy Scriptures, to consider for life application principles. As I learned to walk by faith, my voracious appetite for truth led me to pursue God with all of my heart. When I received instruction along the way about one’s word being his bond, this Scriptural principle was simply confirming a belief system that had already been a part of my upbringing and was ingrained into my psyche. So in essence, it was “no big deal.”

It was “no big deal,” *until* the Lord used Psalm 15:4 to require me to sell all of my assets and move my family to Honduras in 1998. As the Father was calling our family into ministry, He had to use a number of unique situations in order to confirm that He was doing the calling, and it was up to us to choose to respond appropriately. We have humorously defined our move into full-time ministry as a “spiritual scavenger hunt.” God would test us by having us pursue His cloud to one location, then give us our assignment to choose to follow the cloud to the next location, and so on. Each time we came to another stop along the path, and we would discover what He wanted us to learn. ***We would have to faithfully choose to follow Him.*** From 1994 to 2000 our family moved a total of five times from: Dallas, Texas to McKinney, Texas; to Honduras; to Norman, Oklahoma; and finally to our current location in 2004 in Kissimmee, Florida. Somehow during the course of all of these moves, He was testing our resolve to continue our fervent pursuit of Him.

When I made the decision in 1998 to move to Honduras, a number of factors were involved in the process. Without going into all of the details, our primary motivation was to go to Central America to help establish a short-wave radio transmission station that was going to preach the gospel to the north in English and to the south in Spanish. I did not have any technical radio expertise, but had been a radio host on a program once called “The Remnant Report.” At the time, we were relying on the expertise of a fellow who owned a radio network and with whom we were planning to enter into a partnership.

During the course of our preparations, as I was traveling back and forth to Honduras, it was beginning to appear that all was not what it seemed. But, since I had put my proverbial

hand to the plow—with no intention of looking back—I was committed (Luke 9:62). I had made the statement that our family was going to move so many times, that I was literally trapped by my words. *As it turned out, I had sworn to my own detriment.* Just like Jephthah in Judges 11 (who incidentally is listed among the faithful in Hebrews 11), who had given his word to the Lord, he was willing, at great personal loss (in his case, the death of his only child), to swear to his own hurt.

I remember that as Margaret and I began to discern that some of the things which we expected to materialize in our Central American venture *were not*, our spirits were troubled. At one time, at least three different sets of people had indicated that they were going to caravan with us through Mexico and Guatemala on our way to Honduras to likewise help in our ministry efforts. As it turns out, only one man drove down with us, who was not interested in the project, yet wanted to travel to Central Honduras with others. I decided to honor my word to my own hurt, but to completely break off the ministry relationship. Instead, we moved to the small island of Roatán off of the northern coast of Honduras. In so doing, I could honor my word to those who wanted to travel to Honduras over the road.

This was one major cloud movement, among several others, which was used to launch our current activities. At the time, I almost likened it to a test of faith that Abraham endured when he was told to come out of the city of Ur. The Lord has used this step of faith from 1998, and subsequent other steps, to teach us a tremendous amount about Him and His mission for our lives. **To this end, we are very grateful.**

One of the most important things that I did learn is to choose my statements very wisely and carefully, recognizing that when you do make verbal commitments to people, *God is going to hold you accountable.* Think about the times you may have made commitments to your spouse or children, and how when they did not materialize, your integrity and reliability were tarnished. Is this the kind of character you want to communicate to those who are intimately connected with you?

Considering the concept of making verbal commitments, Yeshua the Messiah and James the Just have some admonitions which address the problems associated with making statements, that when broken are likely to incur commensurate judgment:

“Again, you have heard that the ancients were told, ‘YOU SHALL NOT MAKE FALSE VOWS, BUT SHALL FULFILL YOUR VOWS TO THE LORD’ [Leviticus 19:12; Numbers 30:3; Deuteronomy 23:22]. But I say to you, make no oath at all, either by heaven, for it is the throne of God, or by the earth, for it is the footstool of His feet, or by Jerusalem, for it is THE CITY OF THE GREAT KING [Psalm 48:2]. Nor shall you make an oath by your head, for you cannot make one hair white or black. **But let your statement be, ‘Yes, yes’ or ‘No, no’; anything beyond these is of evil**” (Matthew 5:33-37).

“But above all, my brethren, do not swear, either by heaven or by earth or with any other oath; **but your yes is to be yes, and your no, no, so that you may not fall under judgment**” (James 5:12).

For those of us who sincerely desire to dwell in the House of the Lord on His holy hill (Psalm 15:1), it would be my recommendation that we learn from the lessons of life to choose our words wisely. I can clearly see the hand of the Lord in all of the moves that He has had us make, and I have definitely grown in my understanding of His Word and what He requires. *But I look into the future with substantially more caution and reservation than I did years ago.*