

Psalms 18-10-04b

Let's resume our study now in Psalm 15 and as I suggest to you I think this is a question and answer that has to do or is interesting to people who care enough about God to want to be in his presence and to be in his periphery and to be the kind of person of whom he approves and this is a threefold characteristic. This is someone who has a righteous walk, has righteous works, and is characterized by truth in their heart and that truth is reflected in their speech. Because of this, because these are the characteristics, the way to be this person and to become this person and to remain this person is to check for falling down in these areas and one of the easiest, it surprises me a little bit, wouldn't you think that something else would be at the top of the list? Talking about someone who is qualified to be in God's holy presence and the very first thing out of the gate is they are controlling their tongue.

Tongue control, not being a spy with the tongue, not tiptoeing and investigating and turning things over and over and over with their tongue, not carrying information. What does a spy do? He goes and looks and he comes back and he tells what he saw and so this gets closer to tail bearing more so than backbiting and a lot of times this gets dressed up as being beneficial or as, you know, I just think you ought to know and then you know dot dot dot and you remember that James talks about the tongue a little bit and it's, you know, set on fire by the flames of hell and so on and it's, it used to be a feature of your Western hero and so on that they didn't say much, they were taciturn, they didn't go in for a lot of talking and it's probably good to be a little bit less voluble when it comes to the affairs of others in view of this first great exhortation. The one who does not tell everything they have found out with their tongue.

They're not a, not a spy, nor do they do evil with their, to their neighbor and this is where we pick up now and doing evil is a word that is going to come up again, it occurs more than once in this psalm and the next time it comes up is in the next verse and so I just want to note right now that there is this word Ra, R-A-A-H and it is spelled with the evil ion. Ra with an aleph is the verb that means to see and to look and to observe but Ra with the ion is the word for evil and this is not necessarily moral evil. There's a passage over in Isaiah I think where God says I form light and create evil in your in King James and it's this word Ra but it doesn't mean necessarily moral degeneracy it means harm and you see that just go ahead and look at the next verse in whose eyes a vile person is despised but he honors those who fear the Lord he who swears to his own hurt his own hurt the same word Ra, R-A-A-H and it's the evil ion swears to his own evil well you wouldn't translate it evil there but it's the same word so this we want to take a look at what does it mean to to do harm to his neighbor I think we would take it for granted that you know evil would be a bad thing and you're not going to qualify for God's presence if you're if you're manufacturing evil if you're making or doing evil and this is Asah you remember most people I think by now are familiar with the the two Hebrew verbs for creating or doing or bringing into being something Barah is used of God creating the heavens and the earth and you know we say well Barah means create something from nothing when it comes to the creation of the woman it doesn't use Barah it uses Asah and we say well he took existing

materials and constructed the woman reaches into Adam's side and next thing you know here's Eve well this is Asah so you make or manufacture harm and this is almost constructing a harm this is this is causing something to become a harm and then you have the word neighbor and this is really where we get our insight because the the word for neighbor is also ra are and the evil ion but it is pointed and pronounced a little differently this is Rhea R-E-A Rhea but in the consonant text which is the original text it says he doesn't do evil to his evil or he doesn't do neighbor to his neighbor and it's it's a pun it's a word play in Hebrew he doesn't do ra to his ra and you're supposed to smile at this a little bit but what does it really mean well there are a lot of different words that are translated as someone near at hand and this one is even translated husband in one case that's about as near at hand as as you can get it's translated as companion as neighbor as friend as another person but this is your intimate friend your your fellow and it is different than the word in the next line and maybe we can learn more by looking at the third line in verse 3 he doesn't do evil to his neighbor nor does he take up a reproach against his friend and the word friend here has a different emphasis this has the idea of someone who is near at hand who is is close by it this word is translated it's actually sort of an adjective and it means to be near next to to be adjacent to be close by and you say well you know what's the difference in somebody who's a neighbor and somebody who's just close by well do you remember in Exodus chapter 2 that Moses is out surveying the slaves you know his his fellow Hebrews and one slave rises up and kills another this is Exodus 2.13 Moses goes out the second day two Hebrew men were fighting and he said to the one who did the wrong why are you striking your companion why are you striking your fellow this is our first word here the RA the Raya it's it is someone with whom you have something in common so in this case they have in common being slaves you have the same idea in Exodus 21.14 if a man acts with premeditation against his neighbor to kill him by treachery take him from my altar that he may die this is what happened to Joab who slew Abner by treachery and David tells Solomon do not let Joab's gray head go down to the grave in peace Joab goes and lays hold of the altar it doesn't matter Benaiah goes in and dispatches in anyway and that's based on this Exodus 20.14 a man acts with premeditation against his neighbor I'm going to suggest that the best translation of this although it's a little bit archaic is fellow against his fellow because fellow this reminds me of there's some words in English that it's too bad they've left the common vernacular nobody says you know do no harm to your fellow it's just an adjective now not a noun and it's your your fellow slave your fellow jurist your fellow train rider whatever it may be but there's some words in earlier versions of English that really were useful I'll give you an example there we have no word now that means fetch fetch has fallen out of usage but what does fetch mean if you're not going to use the word fetch how are you going to describe that action it means to go out and get a thing and bring it back we had one beautiful word for that fetch me a minstrel right that that's what is it Jeremiah when he's doing you know one of these guys trying to have a vision apologize I should have thought about that episode before I gave it but he says you know fetch me somebody go get him and bring him back you get can you think of any other word that means that in modern day you can't because there isn't one well same thing with fellow fellow means someone with whom you have either immediately or over time something in common there is some commonality they are a fellow juror they are a fellow worker they are a fellow

traveler you're both on the same plane you're sitting in adjacent seats fellow so it can be momentary or it can be long-term but you have something in common we're all in grace and truth Bible Church we are fellow members we are fellow members of the body of Christ along with many other people who are not fellow members of this church but they are fellow members of the body so it takes one aspect of relationship and says you are related because you have this in common so back to our verse the one who does not tell everything they know with their tongue nor harms someone with whom they have something in common you can have something in common with somebody at the store maybe you're just standing in line and their little bratty kid is being obnoxious and pulling things off the shelves and screaming and throwing a conniption fit and at that moment they are a fellow shopper they're a fellow standing in line person well how does how does our opportunity exist to do harm there's all kinds of harm that you can do to someone with whom you have something in common so to dwell in God's tents we don't take that opportunity and what what if we think somebody needs harm they need slowing down they need taking down a peg they need some negative consequence because we're in this we're linked in some way this slave that Moses saw felt like his fellow was in need of striking and so he struck him David says if you're going to dwell in God's tents if you're going to abide on God's holy hill if you're going to have what you do and what you say what is it going to have truth in your heart if you're gonna have a worthy walk in Ephesians Paul says walk worthy of the calling with which you were called to do that you have to let that go you don't make it your business to engage in harm giving retribution I'm going to make sure you have a name harm is just a negative consequence God forms light and creates negative consequences for people who need negative consequences God does that this is kind of like conviction of sin we may recognize that their sin but it is not our job to be the convict or God's got a all-knowing all-powerful all-present Holy Spirit to do that and you are elbowing God's Spirit out of the way to try to impress on someone their wrongness you are trying to create it that let the Holy Spirit do this he knows just how just when just how much just in what way what is the perfect way to discourage and to cool down something that needs it we don't so we do not wag our tongue and we do not with someone with whom we have something in common we don't inflict negative consequences this is the definition of judging vis-a-vis discernment I discern that there's a problem but unless I have God-given authority such as a parent or a boss in a company or somebody else who has a proper exercise I don't inflict negative consequences for that because they are my fellow this is not an up-down relationship we are at the same level fellow means I'm another one like you now if Moses had found the slave goofing off and struck him maybe bad management practice but it's a different thing than a fellow slave you see why fellow is important here you don't do lateral consequence giving the only consequence giving is if you have authority and you are responsible and you have to do that in the execution of your God-given duty then you inflict a negative consequence but fellows you don't do that if you do that you're trying to assign yourself authority that God did not give and you're not going to dwell in his tents and you're not going to abide on this hill and you're not going to have truth in your heart and you're not going to be able to do righteousness and you're not going to be able to walk uprightly you're going to be bowed over with a load from busybodying yourself with somebody else's affairs so it's important to do no

harm to somebody at your same level your fellow now it's the next line nor does he take up a reproach against his friend nor does he take up a reproach against his friend to take up here means to bear or carry this is like Pharaoh p-h-e-r-o in Greek and in the Pharaoh is often used to translate this word to bear or carry around so what does that mean a reproach this is not unlike the Ragal idea above but this is somebody else bringing up this negative case so this is a shame or a rebuke that's what this word means is translated reproach and so you carry around this rebuke you if somebody gives it to you you take it and you carry you convey it you transported around and the word friend here is the one I mentioned earlier this is Kuro and it means the one who is just next door you may or may not have anything in common with him you may not even know them but if you are carrying around reproach again this I am reminded of this just all consuming occupation people have with the FBI investigation of our judicial nominee and so there are people who say well you know the let's look into the judge even more the FBI's already checked him six times but you know these six things that the Lord hate gay seven are an abomination to him so he said six investigations let's do a seven and that'll be perfect and then there's people to say oh this accuser this poor woman you know she's and want to carry reproach around about her look anything I think or say about either one of them doesn't make a butterfly wing flap difference in what's going to happen so why would I stir up myself or the people around me why would I take up a reproach for or against either one of them and carry it around where is the profit where is the upside to this unless I can find an applicable principle from God's Word if I can find a way to use that to edify my fellow believers such as using it as an example for this psalm so be it otherwise why even talk about it why speculate why wag my tongue about the things I have no way of knowing I have nothing in common with the judge I have nothing in common with the woman I didn't party the way they partied when I was in high school I didn't go to the Ivy League schools and the highfalutin East Coast places they went I have nothing in common I have no insight I have no knowledge of any of that so why would I wag my tongue all I do is endanger the potential to dwell in the tents of the Lord to abide in his Holy Hill do you really want to fritter that away to have some fun you know bantering and speculating and opining about things of which I know nothing so I'm not going to take up as a believer interested in being in God's presence I'm not going to occupy my mind with these things what am I going to do instead I want to be one of these people who speaks the truth in his heart do you know the truth about the judge and this accuser do you know the truth about the the motives of the senators bringing all of this up and fanning it into flame and all of the bloggers and the vloggers and the everybody else it does any part of that partake of a truth that you want to have in your heart as you come into the presence of God I don't think so so I disinvest myself I remove myself from those environs and I fill my heart with truth that is pleasing and upbuilding to my fellow believers and is honorable in the sight of the Lord that's what I want my heart to be full of I don't want to be full of angst or anger or useless indignation at things that I have nothing in common with and aren't next to me will it make a difference in the long run to my kids who's on the Supreme Court when's the last time a Supreme Court case had made any difference at all to me personally maybe Brovie Wade makes a difference in and around your periphery but listen nothing's gonna happen on that thing in our lifetime I promise you it's too complicated it is too intertwined it is too intertwined

the thing is gonna sit it's gonna soak it's gonna sour people are gonna do what they want to do legally or illegally and I may have more to say about that in the future I was sideways got to looking at David talking about God forming him in his mother's womb and knitting him together what does it mean to knit together what is it that's being knit together if you think about your body parts they don't form as little separate bits and then they get knit together there is a part of you that begins as an entirety and continues to be an entirety just more and more fully developed but knit together and when you look at the Hebrew word there's something else being joined anyway we'll talk about that later but if you are not going to take up a reproach against somebody nearby you don't do evil to somebody with whom you have something in common nor do you carry around and and convey and transmit shame or rebuke against this other person so what do you do instead verse 4 in whose eyes and that's very literal it's exactly what it says in whose eyes a vile person is despised a vile person what does it mean to be vile well this is a very animal poetic word in Hebrew buzzer buzzer it just sounds negative when you say it you don't let us go into the courts of the Lord and buzzer it just doesn't it doesn't sound positive if you're going to buzz ah that you are going to despise that that's what it means it means to find something contemptible in the active cow stem I heap scorn on this I despise it I disdain it I scorn it I find it to be vile get it away from me do you ever find a little Tupperware container in the refrigerator and you open it up and suddenly you buzz ah that's what it means it's been in there way too long it's now a science experiment and it's got an offensive odor and it's to find offensive to want to get away from a thing that is bizarre so in whose eyes if you make a noun out of this and this is going to be a participle this is a niffle participle Cal is active niffle is passive so that's a fancy way of saying this is someone who has the quality of or has become vile or contemptible the the niffle participle if it was an active participle they would be walking around heaping scorn on things but passive is it's it's it's something you either do to yourself that would be more of a reflexive but many times the passive voice this simply means you have become vile you have become contemptible it doesn't really go into the details but you you are contemptible because of some something previous and so in whose eyes a a person who deserves scorn is and then you have a different word here and this is also a niffle participle and it is what it basically means is to reject that which is scornful that which has made itself contemptible or despicable is rejected you push it away as loathsome as this this word is actually translated to to melt away to to just make that go away it's translated to refuse or reject despise in the sense of to to get it out of your sight out of your periphery out of your house out of your environment so that which is despicable is refused and rejected you don't countenance it you don't approve it you don't encourage it you refuse and reject you you push it away it is it doesn't mean active despising this this is a niffle this is passive and it means you're you're not it would almost be a contradiction with the previous line if you're not going to take up a reproach against somebody near at hand but yet you're supposed to despise the vile person well aren't those contradictory not at all this this says you withdraw yourself you reject and push away these things that are scornful and despicable and have made themselves that you passively remove yourself from them you make a separation you don't have something in common with it and it's not near because it is in common and because it is near you don't actively cause it harm or bear tails about it or heap shame on it you

put distance between yourself and it that's what this is saying in whose eyes it is far away it doesn't say on whose lips it doesn't say in it with whose actions it says in your eyes in your opinion the way you look at it is that should be refused that should be rejected this is discernment without judging what is the difference in discerning and judging this is it in my eyes this is to be rejected and refused but I am NOT inflicting consequences on it with my tongue or with my actions or by carrying freight to others and diminishing or tearing down this person in their eyes I am NOT God I am NOT going to make the negative consequences in my eyes I am going to put distance between myself and that I refuse it I reject it I despise it with my eyes but I am NOT actively inflicting consequences I discern I do not judge now if we do not understand and implement in our thinking and in our talking and in our behavior the difference between discerning and judging we're not going to be in the courts of the Lord the next line in verse 4 says he honors those who fear the Lord what does it mean to honor those who fear the Lord well this is kibbutz this is our old friend kibbutz it comes from kavod the word that means to glorify it literally means heavy so you how do you honor someone who fears the Lord you assign them weight their situation matters to you their well-being carries weight in your calculations honor is kind of an abstraction but if someone who fears the Lord is in your periphery then their welfare matters their presence matters you look out for them that's something you have in common and that goes beyond mere commonality that's not just the word we saw earlier someone who fears the Lord they are one who is potentially qualified for verses 1 & 2 and so that carries weight that's where you put your priority that's where you have your emphasis he assigns weight to he kavod those who fear the Lord now you notice I said before that these these lines are almost a perfect chiasm the the first lines there in verses 1 & 2 and then you come back out with the prime lines the corresponding lines in in verses 3 and in verse 4 and so he honors those who fear the Lord and you have the fear of the Lord right at the end of that line and and Lord is the first word at the top and it's the last word here so you would expect well now we have a break or a change and we do indeed have one it says he who swears to his own ra his own hurt his own evil if you will his own potential harm and does not change and there's no way around it this word for swear is the word to to take an oath to make a promise and even if that promise involves personal detriment it doesn't come out well you you think of Jephthah swearing an oath that that he would dedicate the first thing he saw when he returned from a successful battle if God would give him victory so he returns the first thing he sees is his daughter well that was a detriment that was something he wished hadn't happened because he actually implicated his daughter when he should have only implicated himself and whatever oath that he made you know why don't you make an oath about yourself and what you will do don't make an oath implicating somebody else but he had that vertical authority as her father and she an unmarried girl and so she ends up having to live out her life as a celibate gal in the service of God rather than living out a normal life I have the feeling that God probably compensated her in other ways for the loss because we don't suffer because of somebody else's harm in the long run somebody else's bad decisions God is not unrighteous in that regard but you make an oath and even if it hurts even if it costs even if it subtracts he does not change he does not put out his money at interest at usury nor does he take a bribe against the innocent so after honoring those who fear the Lord you have this final threefold and I think

the the verse divisions in the wrong place I would put the first five beginning at he who swears to his own hurt and you have three lines in this verse just as you have three full descriptions up above so there's a threefold description here when he promises he keeps his promise even when it hurts he does not put out his money at interest now what does this mean is it only talking about financial lending this this is a metaphor that means he doesn't do what he does in order to get a return if you make an oath and it hurts you don't change you still fulfill your vow you keep your promise even if it costs if you promise somebody till death do us part in sickness and in health and then they get violently ill and it becomes a real challenge doesn't matter people say well how can you do that you know you have no life anymore you're you're just a slave to this person's needs and you don't care you made an oath and even if it seems to be a bad deal you do not change I made my promise and look I'm I'm doing this because I love the Lord I have honor in my heart I'm looking ahead to when I can circulate in those tents and and abide on that hill and God's not going to forget my work of faith and labor of love and patience of hope faith hope and love God is not unrighteous to forget I'm taking the long view here and it may look like a burden right now but my momentary light affliction is working for me an eternal weight of glory and I never forget that I've got truth circulating in my heart and that's what I'm telling you that's what I'm speaking these are my actions this is my walk verses 1 & 2 so do not put out as money usually this is any thing that you give by way of benefit to someone else you're not looking for payback you're not looking for compensation you're not looking for well I'll give you this but I'm gonna expect you know compensation and something return doesn't put out his money at interest nor does he take a bribe against the innocent you're not looking for personal gain in all three of these see how the three fit together they all need to be in verse 5 in my opinion it's the same thing we saw in Corinthians Paul says you're taking each other to court why do you not rather suffer a wrong you would be better to take a hit than to try to get advantage by going to court before unbelievers don't you know you're gonna judge angels look ahead think beyond the moment so when you take an oath it doesn't matter if you suffer a loss as a result if you put something out on behalf of another you're not looking for a return and if there's somebody over here that has an issue you're not going to gain at their expense taking a bribe against the innocent means I'm gonna benefit because this person is is getting hurt and they really don't deserve it they don't deserve it but I'll gain I mean there are people who honestly believe that in the long view I'm back to the Supreme Court thing people who think that for the good of the country we've got to keep this judge off the bench and that end justifies any means even if he is innocent even if his family is is put through all kinds of torture the the the end of making sure that the court doesn't make these radical conservative decisions in the future so we'll we'll cause the innocent to suffer in the interest of something that we think is a gain our position will be advanced at the expense of somebody who even if he's innocent we really don't care at this point this is just our tactic and our ploy to be sure that a long-range goal that we think is beneficial will take place God's people don't do that you don't sacrifice the innocent in the interest of what you think is a gain you don't take a bribe against the innocent a bribe is simply I see an advantage here and even if it costs somebody something that's okay if there's going to be any cost do you see this symmetry here if there's going to be a cost you absorb it if you make a promise and it costs you it's okay for it to cost you you make

sure it doesn't cost somebody else if there's going to be a cost try to absorb it yourself don't get ahead at somebody else's expense that's the idea and notice the final verse here the final phrase he who does these things I saw once again he who does these things who makes these things happen shall never be moved this actually means to never shake to never slip to never fall will be fixed and immovable fixed and immovable where verse 1 you will have a permanent passkey to the tents of the Lord you will have a permanent piece of ground of your own on God's holy hill it doesn't mean be moved in your immediate circumstances you'll never be moved off of God's holy hill you'll never be moved out of God's intimate personal presence in his tents the person who does these shall never la olam and this is talking about eternity unto the ages la olam never moved out of God's presence doesn't mean you're not gonna live in the cave of Adullam or you're not going to be chased from pillar to post in and out of Keilah and all the other places where Saul was hounding David what does it mean think about the last part of Psalm 23 surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life and sometimes I need goodness and I need mercy and I shall dwell in the house of the Lord la olam la olam now I told you I would give you a hint about the passage that I think David was meditating on here and so as our final thought real quickly now just turn back to Leviticus chapter 19 and this is representative of number passages Leviticus 5 was mentioned and that is equally valid the vocabulary is what attracted me to Leviticus chapter 19 look at beginning at verse 12 Leviticus 19 12 you shall not swear or take an oath by my name falsely nor shall you profane the name of the Lord your God I am Yahweh I am the Lord you shall not cheat your neighbor nor rob him the wages of him who is hired shall not remain with you all night until morning what you owe you pay and no delay you shall not curse the deaf nor put a stumbling block before the blind you shall fear your God notice the link between treating those who are poor those who are innocent those who have a need in the light of fearing the Lord you shall do no injustice in judgment you shall not be partial to the poor this is verse 15 nor honor the person of the mighty notice you don't be partial to the poor you treat people fairly you don't prejudice yourself one way or the other in righteousness you shall judge your neighbor you do righteousness with those who are near and that word neighbor in verse 15 is one of our psalm words you shall not go about as a tale bearer verse 16 among your people nor shall you take a stand against the life of your neighbor I am the Lord you shall not hate your brother in your heart you shall surely rebuke your neighbor and not bear sin because of him you shall not take vengeance nor bear any grudge against the children of your people but you shall love your neighbor as yourself I am the Lord you shall keep my statutes you shall not let your livestock breed with another kind you shall not sow your field with mixed seed nor shall a garment of mixed linen and wool come upon you that's a little different issue but you'll remember that the Lord Jesus quotes 19:18 just the last part and remember the the guy responds the Pharisee responds and says who is my neighbor look at verse 17 you shall not hate your brother in your heart you shall surely rebuke your neighbor and not bear sin because of him all of these preceding verses talk about those who are near uses the same vocabulary as Psalm 15 so how careful should we be about those with whom we have something in common how careful should we be about those who are near how important is it to guard the door of our lips and make sure that our tongue isn't used to inflict consequences if we're interested in dwelling in

God's presence these are quick and easy things to check and to avoid and things to cultivate in our own soul so it's a wonderful Psalm and it is a wonderful counterbalance to Psalm 14 where you see the lot of the fool who says in her heart in his heart there is no God and we have a choice we can end up like category fool or we can end up like category courts of the Lord and I know which one I'm gonna struggle to aim for strive to enter by the narrow gate because narrow is the way and straight is the gate that leads to life and few there be that find it know why that everybody's going to be able to fit on God's holy hill and everybody's going to be able to fit in God's tents because there aren't very many of us that care enough about getting there and it will be comfortable and it will be ample and there will be plenty of room I'd rather be the few the proud than the many and the moronic so with that we'll close in prayer father thank you for the wonderful encouragement and insight that we have from your servant David on the way to enter into your gates and into your courts we pray that God the Holy Spirit will aid us as we reflect on these things and as we examine ourselves to see where we can more closely conform ourselves to the perfect example of the Lord Jesus to the example of those men and women throughout the scriptures who have dedicated themselves to being holy and honorable in your sight and in their conduct toward fellow believers we pray all these things in Jesus name Amen