

*1 LORD, who shall abide in thy tabernacle? who shall dwell in thy holy hill?
3 He that backbiteth not with his tongue, nor doeth evil to his neighbour, nor taketh up a
reproach against his neighbour. (Psalm 15:1,3)*

The psalmist continues his description of those who fellowship with God and those who are in saving relationship to Him. Let us remember that we are not being told how to be saved, but the marks of those who are saved.

The righteous man does not backbite with his tongue. He refuses to speak evil of his neighbor. It is indeed sinful to think too hardly of our friends, but no damage is done if we remain silent until our malicious feelings have been repented of and subdued. But when we give our wicked thoughts to our tongue, we always cut and hurt, sometimes inflicting wounds that will never heal. We pass on the poison of our minds and enflame others with the hell of our own bosoms. Spurgeon said, "All slanderers are the devil's bellows to blow up contention, but those are the worst which blow at the back of the fire."

The man who walks with God not only does not initiate slander, but will not listen to it or pass it on. Trapp said, "The tale-bearer carrieth the devil in his tongue, and the tale-hearer carries the devil in his ear." If the slanderer could find no delighted listeners to his evil reports, he would soon give up peddling them.

We are eager to absent ourselves from the presence of a drunk, but it is doubtful that the man's boorish behavior will do us as much harm as the gossip. What man would not seek to stop someone from damaging another's property? Should we be less tolerant of those who come to us maligning our neighbor's character? Property can usually be restored or replaced much quicker and easier than character that has been put in doubt.

It is vain to profess that we love God while we demonstrate that we do not love God's creation, man. And how can we say we love men when our tongues are employed in railing against them? May the God of mercy and grace give us grace to stop our ears against malicious rumors and our mouths from evil talk.

-C.M.