

Psalm 15

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Date: 28 February 2016

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[0 : 00] Psalm 15, Psalm 15, that's page 549 in the Church Bible. Psalm 15.

Lord, who may dwell in your sacred tent? Who may live on your holy mountain? The one whose way of life is blameless, who does what is righteous, who speaks the truth from their heart, whose tongue utters no slander, who does no wrong to a neighbour and casts no slur on others, who despises a vile person but honours those who fear the Lord, who keeps an oath even when it hurts and does not change their mind, who lends money to the poor without interest, who does not accept a bribe against the innocent.

Whoever does these things will never be shaken. Well, could I just thank you again for allowing me to come and bring God's word.

It's always a privilege to do that. And thank my hosts for today. I've been well looked after, well fed. I don't know what Grace will say if I go home and get on the scales and I'll put on a few pounds, but we shall have to wait for that.

But it is good to be here and to be able to share fellowship in the gospel. And my prayer tonight is that as a result of what we look at, we will draw nearer to Christ.

[1 : 53] And we're going to do that by looking at Psalm 15. This very short psalm. And the psalms have many themes, don't they?

Some are prayers and some are praise. Others reflect hardship, while others show a real trust in God from the writers.

And then there are a few of those psalms, like Psalm 15, that give us instruction.

Now, as a bit of background, you may know that Psalm 1 through to Psalm 41 were all written by David. And he was a man.

The Bible tells us after God's own heart, from being a young boy, he had trusted in the one true God of Israel.

[2 : 59] Through many trials, he had continued to trust. And in a time of peace and consolidation, as king, he had known God's hand upon him.

So this short psalm is written by what we would call a believer, somebody who trusted in God.

And because of its resemblance to Psalm 24, was probably written around the same time that the ark of God was removed to the holy hill in Zion.

And there was a question going around at that time, and we read about it in 1 Chronicles 15. Who should attend? Who should look after?

Who should move the ark of God? It was a very, very serious question. God had laid down very clear instructions. So it was a matter of great significance.

[4 : 12] You may recall that in 1 Chronicles 15, the unauthorized people had tried to move the ark.

and disaster had struck. If we look at it, it says, in verse 13 of 1 Chronicles 15, God says, for because you did not do it the first time, the Lord our God broke out against us because we did not consult him about the proper law.

We didn't do it right the first time. And then the second occasion, in 1 Chronicles 26, the Lord had informed them, had reassured them that those who needed to move the ark, those who were supposed to move the ark, were the Levites.

Those were the ones that God set to move it. And assisting them or within that body was the household of Obed-Edom who we are told served the Lord holy and were the right ones to do it.

This is the context of this psalm. Who? Who should move the ark? So with this in mind, this psalm was written to instruct those who would read it to the type of life that was pleasing to God in those who serve you.

[6 : 21] Those who serve the Lord whole. Those who are set aside to the task. And in order to know God's blessing, there are things both to avoid to avoid, and there are things to do.

The psalm asks the question, doesn't it, who is worthy? Now, it's not speaking about whether or not we are converted or not, because this is written by a Christian, by somebody who is a believer in God.

so he's not addressing that, because David realises that only God knows whom he has chosen. But here, the context is, who is worthy by description, by character?

Who is able to know God's blessing? who is able to know these things? We know the Lord Jesus Christ pleased his father.

Why? Because he was perfect. He was perfect in his character, he was perfect in every aspect of his life. But this psalm is going to show us that those who trust in Christ, those who through grace are being conformed day by day to his image should be looking to their character and how they live in order that they are worthy in the context of this psalm.

[8 : 35] And C.H. Spurgeon, you know, he very helpfully describes this psalm as the question and answer.

That's all he says about it. And that is exactly what this psalm does. So what we're going to do is to look at the question that it asks in a bit more detail and then to look at how it answers itself within the psalm.

And it is a serious question, isn't it? What kind of people will go to heaven? We know converted people, people who've trusted in the blood of Christ, promised, they are promised that they will go to heaven.

But how should they live? How should they live? Who will be able to have fellowship with you, O Lord?

That's what the question is. How do we recognise people who are going to have fellowship with God? It follows on a bit from this morning, doesn't it?

[9 : 53] Are we so different from the world that people will know and recognise us as being those who follow Christ?

Lord, who may abide in your tabernacle? Who may dwell in your holiness? Who can live in the presence of God? How do we recognise their characters?

And when you think about it, if you know anything about God from your Bibles, it talks about him as being a consuming fire, majestic in his glory, holy and pure in all his ways.

And that sort of, I don't know about you, but does it sort of excite you to think of God like that? But also it humbles us, doesn't it? Because you're excited to think that's the God we worship.

But it humbles us to think how, how can we have a relationship with him? Are we going to be able to abide with him, to dwell with him?

[11 : 15] you see, because it's not asking the question that that rich young ruler asked in Luke 18, Lord, what must I do to be saved?

Or the Philippian jailer, when he asked Paul and Silas in that prison, what must I do to be saved? because David who wrote this is saved, he's God's man.

But does blood, birth, ancestry, our wealth, our position in life, our religiousness, can that lead us? to the holy hill in Zion, where we desire to be. You see, because we know these cannot provide the answer and make you an inmate in God's house.

Only Christ can do that through his blood. But this psalm is going beyond that, and I'm emphasizing this again because this is about the fact that we know we are saved.

[12 : 49] Perhaps a lot of you here tonight know that you belong to Christ. But this is talking about how we recognize that in your character and in the way you live your life.

we have robes of righteousness, don't we? We need robes of righteousness covering all our sin so that we can enter.

But he wants to gain, he's venturing here, David is venturing this question to gain some insight into the evidences that should be seen when one has been taught by and is seeking to be conformed to the likeness and image of Jesus Christ.

So having said that, the question is an important question and the answer is just as important. The answer he offers is summarized in the second verse here.

and then in the following verses, three, four and five, he gives us some practical examples coming out of verse two.

[14 : 27] But there are three overarching guides given that should be evident in the child of God. If you are a child of God, the question we should all be asking ourselves, are these three questions, are these three answers that David gives?

And they're interesting that they talk about three aspects of our lives, our walk, our work, and the word, our words, what we say.

So the first statement is, who may dwell, who may abide in your tabernacle, who may dwell in your holy hill?

He who walks uprightly. The word walk here is the same word that is used in Genesis 17, verse 1, when Abraham was spoken to by God, directly, and he said to Abraham, walk thou before me, and be thou perfect.

And we know that that word perfect means blameless, live a blameless life, you've got to walk in a way that you are blameless. Don't be open to accusations that you have done evil to your neighbour, as we read through the verses 3 to 5, that you've done evil to your neighbour, or you've mixed with those who are evil.

[16 : 08] Recognise them. And that's an interesting idea, isn't it? how far do we go down the road of evangelism?

How far do we go down the road of being friends with those who we know are against the Christian way? How far do we go?

Do we go where they go? Do we do the things they do in order to win them? it's important that we know who they are.

It's important that we know what people believe and the way they live their lives. But there is a question for us in how deeply we involve ourselves in the lifestyles in order to justify evangelism. Winning souls for Christ. Do we have to become like them and do the things that they do in order to win them for Christ? I'll leave that question with you.

[17 : 34] But I do think it's a very serious question. I think a lot of churches are in danger of walking closely with things that are not God honouring.

And we have to be careful, don't we? And perhaps in a place that draws lots of visitors, lots of people who come to a place like Whitby for holidays and for special events.

Sometimes you have to think about what you're going to do. But correspondingly, this passage also tells us that not only have we got to recognise those who are different from us, different from Christians who don't live that Christian life, who don't attend that way, also tells us that we're to recognise those who are like us, who are believers in Christ, and we are to respect them and do them honour.

That's what the passage says. But he honours those who fear the Lord, in verse four. He honours those who fear the world.

You see, walking in God's way, living our lives in God's way, is a two-edged sword.

[19 : 02] We are not to walk the path of evil. We're not to do that. But we are to walk the path of the godly.

God honouring. In all that we do. In Isaiah 32, verse 6, it talks about the foolish person.

The foolish person. It says, for the foolish person will speak foolishness, and his heart will work in equity, to practice ungodliness, to utter error against the Lord, to keep the hungry unsatisfied, and he will cause the drink of the thirsty to fall.

And then it goes on to talk about the schemes of the schemer are evil. He devises wicked plans.

The man who desires to enter the holy hill of Zion is not to grieve, and he's not to injure those.

He's not to grieve or injure, or offend his neighbour. He's to honour the household of God, even though they may be wretched and poor.

[20 : 30] This was a real challenge to me. You know, sometimes we desire the friendship of those who have, those who are wealthy, affluent.

And quite often in our churches, the believers in comparison can be wretched and poor. But this psalm tells us that he who walks uprightly is someone who will desire the friendship, he will desire their conversation, he will be interested in praying for them, he will rejoice with them, and he will grieve with them.

Walking uprightly, God honouring, we live in a world where God is not honoured. Are we comfortable in that environment?

Or are we those who seek to honour God and to have a perspective on life that says I don't want to live in that realm.

I don't want people to recognise me as being somebody who's comfortable in the world. But we are God's men and God's women and God's children.

[22 : 21] And we are at home amongst God's people. Ephesians 2 reminds us that we are his workmanship created in him for good works which God had prepared beforehand that we should walk in them.

Walk in them. And then later on in the same book, Paul says walk worthy of the calling with which you are called. We are to walk uprightly with honour and integrity knowing that we are answerable to a God in heaven who sent his son to die for us.

And in doing that we are to be conformed to his image, to Christ's image. image. The insight David had for a modern world, striking isn't it?

He thought his world was complicated but the principles that he sets down here for us is that if we are saved we are to work towards heaven where we can have fellowship with him by walking uprightly.

And the one thing that that doesn't mean is that we don't evangelise. I think you understand that there is a danger sometimes of overcompensating, becoming too much like the world in order to win the world.

[24 : 21] But Jesus didn't do that did he? Jesus didn't become like the world. I mean he upset people. But he always said I'm here to do what my father sent me to do and he set his face like a flint it says to go to the cross.

And all that that entailed he walked uprightly. God's works. Secondly, Lord who may abide in your tabernacle, who may dwell in your holy hill, he that works righteousness.

We are to work God's works, God's way. God's way to do things.

We are to carry out all the tasks that we are given and in a way that pleases God. The work we do is all under the eye of God himself.

He sees us. that's quite a challenging thought I think for us all. In Exodus chapter 2 at the end of that chapter when the children of Israel were under such affliction God says he says I heard you and I remembered you and I saw you with his eyes.

[26 : 08] He saw what was going on with the children of Israel. God sees the works of our hands and if we are to enter his heavenly house, his heavenly home, we are to serve him with righteous works.

We saw that in what we read in 1 Chronicles. You see there was an ark to be moved. And they needed to do it in a way that's obedient to what God had said.

So there was a right way to do things. There is a right way for us to do things. I mean these verses don't they?

They share with us verses speaking about not reproaching the neighbour or taking bribes to do down the poor man. the works that we do in whatever context we do them is to be tempered with love and grace.

Christ showed that didn't he to the people of his time. Jesus told us time and again that he had come to do the works of his father. He came to do things in a way that would be pleasing to God.

[27 : 37] Healing the sick, raising those who were lame, enabling them to walk, feeding up to 20,000 people.

Why did he do those things and how did he do them? He was doing the works of his father with grace and love and care.

James tells us doesn't he in that very well known passage in James 1 27. We quote it often in churches that true religion and undefiled before God is to visit the fatherless and the widower in their affliction and to keep unspotted from the world.

this verse reflects for us the essence of Christ himself.

This is what summarises the way we should live as those who are followers of Christ. We are to care for those who are in need and we are to care for ourselves.

[28 : 58] Keep yourself unspotted from the world. You see there is to be outward works.

Grace is natural reflection in our lives. It works. The way in which we work with people the way in which we work in our families the way in which we work at our work the way in which we work when we are in the shops the way in which we work in our gardens.

It all sounds as if your high life is taken up with this. Well it is. Grace and kindness they reflect the work that has been done within.

Faith without works is dead. faith with works is inevitable. It should be inevitable.

It should be a natural progression. 1 Corinthians tells us this. We are to abound in the work of the Lord in all its facets.

[30 : 20] secular employment, church life. There is no division in our service in the work that we do.

Whatever we do we are to do the work God's way. And you know God is gracious.

He is gracious. Because what he tells us in 2 Corinthians 9 is this.

That we don't have to do it on our own. It's lovely isn't it? We've got to work for him and we've got to do it his way. You haven't got to do it on your own.

2 Corinthians 9 verse 8 tells us this. Grace. Grace is given us by God that we may abound in every good work. It's not done in our own strength.

[31 : 26] We're to do the works of righteousness but we don't do it in our own strength. You should be encouraged you know.

You should be encouraged in these things. God's like that. He knows how hard it is for you and for me when we go to work or when we go out and we want to speak to somebody or we want to do something that's a kindness and I'd much rather sit home and watch a murder mystery on the telly and yet I know I should go and do this work.

Grace is given us by God that we may abound in every good work because it's all of him.

All of him. Draw near to Christ. He will help you and he will build in you a character if you will let him.

One that will be worthy to enter the holy hill. And thirdly he says he who walks righteous and speaks the truth in his heart.

[32 : 57] The word of God has got to have a home in our hearts. In this passage in verses 3 to 5 it talks about back biters, people who defame other people, people who we are not to speak evil or make sport of or parade other people's faults.

This is not to be our conversation, our way of life, the words that we use. Our words, our promises, are to be those that reflect what have happened in our hearts.

Today has been about worshippers, heart worshippers, people who worship Christ from the heart.

Jesus himself was reviled, wasn't he, but he didn't answer back. He kept silent. heart. We know that our tongue is probably the most dangerous part of our body.

We are told to be and encouraged, aren't we, constantly that our yes should be yes and our no should be no. tongue is wired up to our hearts.

[34 : 29] Whatever is going on in our hearts comes out of our mouths. We know this to be true. Some people say, oh, but not me.

Well, I know it's not an anatomical fact that our tongues are connected to our hearts, but emotionally they are.

The Bible tells us so often, the book of James, Proverbs, Psalms, that it's our words.

It's our words that betray us. The words betray the state of our hearts. And it's easy to say the right words and to use the right language when you're sat in church on a Sunday evening amongst people who understand you and are sensitive to your needs.

And we can fool people with our walk because we can behave like a Christian.

[35 : 52] We can behave like a man of God and walk around and be very pious, but we know the Pharisees did that in Jesus' day. And we can also be very kind with our works.

works. We can help people. We can pick people up and bring them to church. We can take them shopping. We can take them to hospital appointments.

We do love it when people say, that was very kind of you. That was very good, wasn't it? We want to make sure people know that we've done those things.

But words, words come out of somewhere deep within our souls, our innermost being.

Out of the abundance of the heart, the mouth speaks. And the Bible is very clear about evil producing evil and good producing good.

[37 : 03] If you think about trees and their fruits from creation, if you plant an apple tree, the likelihood is you're going to get an apple tree grow up.

If you plant the pips, aren't you? And in creation, we know that producing offspring was after its kind.

That's what God tells us. Are we like the psalmist who says to us, God's love love is in your love. Your word have I hid in my heart that I might not sin against you. We have to be guarded.

We have to guard our hearts because our hearts are what produce. Produce is for us our words, what we speak.

[38 : 15] And if you want to enter, if you want to build that character that's going to enable you to go to heaven and enter heaven and be worthy of that, it tells us we've got to speak the truth in our hearts.

We've got to know what the truth is. And therefore our heart and minds have got to be so filled with the word of God that by its presence in us, knowing it, it moderates and it influences our conversations, what we say to people.

And we must allow that word to so overwhelm our bodies that our words are truth.

Proverbs, you know, I don't know if you've read Proverbs through and taken specific subjects, but this is what Proverbs says.

about those who have the word of God in their hearts. Proverbs 15, a word spoken in due season, how good it is.

[39 : 45] A right word said at the right time, coming from a heart that's filled with God's word. God's word. The words of the pure, or the words of the righteous, those who are Christ, are a delight.

Can you say that? Can you think to yourself when you speak that you're so filled with the word of God that your words are a delight?

right? And this is my favourite. If I'm going to have a favourite, this will be it. A word timely given is like golden apples and silver settings.

Isn't that lovely? that's what God says in Proverbs 25. You see, his word is truth.

And the word of God has a beauty about it. That when it is used rightly, when it is spoken in truth, and when it is accompanied by the person who walking uprightly, the person who is working works of righteousness, then you have this lovely package of what we should be aiming to be like.

[41 : 24] Because we do want characters. I presume that all of you tonight want to have characters that when you enter that heavenly realm, you will not be ashamed.

We should desire to be like Christ, to be conformed to him, the one who walked uprightly, the one who worked righteousness, and the one who speaks the truth in his heart, Christ.

Christ. The psalmist says that the Christian who evidences these characteristics, who fits this description, is the one who will enter, who will be worthy to enter the holy hill of Zion.

And how does this conclude? Finally, he who does these things shall never be moved.

He will not be moved. He can be assured that his place or her place is in heaven.

[42 : 49] and that that will be a triumphal entry, because we have sought to live lives that reflect the character, that reflect the image of the one we are supposed to love.

We love Christ. We want to be like him. And he wants you to live a life that is worthy and that is following him.

And he says he will not be moved. Psalm 125 confirms this, because it says, those who trust in the Lord are like Mount Zion, which cannot be moved.

That means cannot be moved, means cannot be defeated, shaken, or removed, but abide, or endure forever. So tonight, take for your text, walk thou before me, and be thou perfect.

Amen. Amen. Amen.