

Psalm 15 • Who Can Dwell on God's Holy Hill?

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Psalm chapter 15. This is a Psalm of David and it begins with a very imposing question. It says,

"O LORD, who shall sojourn (or your Bible may say, abide or dwell) in your tent? Who shall dwell on your holy hill?" (ESV)

Essentially, David begins Psalm 15 by asking the question, who's worthy to come before the King of kings? And that's what he's asking when he talks about being in Your tent or being on Your holy hill. You and I would probably ask this question a bit more directly. And in fact, sometimes we do. We might even say, what does it take to be received into heaven? What must I do to be saved?" Something like that.

Have you ever gone to a fair and seen a church that has a booth? Come and do this questionnaire to find out if you're going to heaven or not or something like that. I think those things can be effective as a means of evangelism. I've never actually done one myself but I've talked to some pastors who have.

But that's essentially the question that's being asked here. Who's worthy? Who's worthy to come before the Lord? Whether we're talking about going before the Lord and making it to heaven or whether we're just talking about going before the Lord in prayer. Isn't it funny? Isn't it funny how we don't even think about that sometimes.

Here's what I'm thinking about. I understand now that it is through the blood of Jesus Christ, that I am enabled to approach the Father, to approach the throne of grace. I get that. And I'm not only aware of it, I have a deep appreciation for what Jesus accomplished or paid in order to give me that right, that privilege, that way into the Holy of Holies. Wonderful. Thank you.

And I think about it when I come to pray. Lord, I'll say in my prayer, I come to you in the name of Jesus. And I know, and He knows what I'm talking about. I'm not coming based on my own worthiness, my own merit on any... I'm

coming because Jesus died for me. And He enabled me to be able to do that. Okay, we're all good with that.

You know what makes me crazy though, is how little I thought of it when I used to pray before I got saved. I used to approach God and I would pray about things even before I got saved. Not often. Once in a while. I mean when I was in great need or something like that. But I would go to Him and I would pray. And I had no concept of whether or not this was okay. Or whether or not He would receive me. Or even what it takes. What are the, what are, what is required?

That's what David is asking in this psalm. What is required to come before the Holy of Holies. To come into the very presence of God, what's required? Okay? I didn't think about that before I got saved. I just waltzed into God's presence, with all my filthy clothes and stuff and, hey, God, And I throw out my request and then get ticked off if He didn't give me what I wanted.

I prayed once. You ever had somebody tell you that? Yeah, I prayed. I prayed and it didn't do any good. As if God's just in the business of answering prayers from anybody or everybody who happens to saunter into His presence, regardless of where they're at and so forth.

Isn't it funny how we come to faith in Jesus Christ and suddenly we have this holy fear. Suddenly we realize... We know that, I don't deserve to be here. And as a believer, I know I still don't deserve personally to be in the presence of God. I know that it's through the blood of the lamb that has cleansed me and washed me that I'm able to go into His presence. Anyway...

The answer comes here. Remember, David is speaking here from an Old Testament perspective. Here's the answer. Who can come before the Lord? Well,

"²He who walks blamelessly (That's really the... That's it right there.) and does what is right and speaks truth in his heart; (all the time.)

³ (He) who does not slander with his tongue and does no evil to his neighbor, nor takes up a reproach against his friend;

⁴ in whose eyes a vile person is despised, but who honors those who fear the Lord; who swears to his own hurt (that means he holds to his word, even if it comes at great cost) and does not change; "

Verse 5,

"who does not put out his money at interest (or charge people exorbitant interest) and does not take a bribe against the innocent. He who does these things shall never be moved."

There you go. There's the answer to the question. And it basically answers the question for us in such a way as to say, God is a holy God. He is a consuming fire. Therefore, to approach this God who is holy, one must be morally upright. Here's your perspective.

And we understand that based on the law because we've studied through the law in the Old Testament. We understand that the Old Covenant was based on blessings and curses. Blessings for obedience and curses for disobedience. And the Jews knew that when you're being blessed by God, and you're walking under the blessing of the Lord, that obedience brought prosperity and the promise of God's presence. And the disobedient, they couldn't expect those things.

And we understand that we get that. We understand that there's this need to be blameless before the Lord. Here's the problem; in the New Testament we have the further understanding that no one will be declared righteous in God's sight by works of the law. In other words, by their own blamelessness or their own ability to keep the law, or to walk in a perpetual obedience to the law. We know that. That righteousness will not be declared upon anyone on that basis.

The New Covenant helps us to understand that we have righteous standing before God predicated upon, faith in the finished work of what Jesus did on the cross. Right? Faith is the key. We're not on a performance track. Praise the Lord. We are living by faith. And it is by faith that we have our standing in God.

Now, having said that, let's be careful here and let's not downplay obedience or disobedience to the point where we make them of no import. We've established the fact that you are not saved by your obedience. You're saved by faith in the finished work of Jesus on the cross.

Now that you're saved, obedience takes on a fairly significant role in our lives. And that's the important thing that Christians have to remember. Because David's principle here of obedience works its way into how we live as believers because it becomes an accurate reflection of our fellowship with God.

Have you ever met somebody who said all the God words? In other words, the Christian speak? But was living in such a way as to cause you to go, huh? What

are you doing? And it was so inconsistent with the life that you know that the Holy Spirit longs for us to live, that you stepped back and thought, I wonder what's going on here.

Let me show you how John puts this. 1 John on the screen. Look at this.

1 John 1:6 (ESV)

"If we say we have fellowship with him while we walk in darkness, we lie and do not practice the truth."

"If we say we have fellowship with God while we walk in darkness,..."

Remember, we said earlier our hearts are drawn to darkness. Well, how about if we're walking in that darkness? Well, John makes it very clear, we're lying. And we are not practicing the truth. You can't have fellowship with God and be living out, walking out that embrace of darkness. Which again, our human hearts, our sinful hearts want to embrace.

It's a pretty strong but clear statement here. If you say, I'm a Christian, I have fellowship, oh man, I got a great relationship with God. And yet you're walking in darkness. In other words, living out that dark lifestyle, John says, there's a problem here. You're, there's a lie that's being told.

You see the point here is that you, as a believer, now that you're saved by grace through faith, now there is a point where obedience begins to say some things about your relationship with God. Okay?

People will come up sometimes after a service and want me to pray for a loved one. I've told you this many times. And they'll say, well he's a believer, or she's a believer. They'll say that quickly. But that's not what I want to know.

I want to know if they're walking in relationship with God. And so I'll often say to them, okay, scale of 1 to 10, where's the warmth of their walk with God? 10 being the warmest most passionate walk with Jesus. Where are they? Well, okay. They're a 1. Well, see, that tells you a lot about that person's relationship. It's nonexistent.

I'm not suggesting necessarily that they're not a believer. Because they could be a backslidden believer. But the point is, we comfort ourselves so many times just assuming that everything's okay because they went down and prayed the

Lord's prayer, or something like that. It's like, wow, I don't think there's a relationship there.

Here's the deal. We're making the point from this Psalm that our ability to approach God, is based upon the blood that Jesus Christ shed on the cross. Okay. As Paul said in Romans chapter 3, I think, is the next one we're looking at. He says,

Romans 3:21-24 (NIV)

"But now a righteousness from God, apart from law, has been made known, to which the Law and the Prophets testify. This righteousness from God comes through faith in Jesus Christ to all who believe. There is no difference, for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, and are justified freely by his grace through the redemption that came by Christ Jesus."

"But now a righteousness from God, apart from law, has been made known, to (And then he says,) which the Law and the Prophets testify. (About) This righteousness from God comes (through works. Oh, that's not what it says. It says it comes) through faith in Jesus Christ (to all who do good works. Nope,) to all who believe. There is no difference, for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, and are justified freely by his grace through the redemption that came by (Jesus) Christ Jesus."

It's a weird thing, isn't it? We're justified by faith in the work of Jesus on the cross, but our faith is proven to be genuine through our obedience. And I understand, I get it. It's a weird, almost, I wouldn't call it paradoxical, but it can mess people's minds.

Where does obedience come into play? Well, it doesn't come into play in salvation. We're saved by grace through faith. But once you're saved, it's... the point is this, you can, if you're going to sit there and say, "I'm an apple tree, I'm an apple tree, I'm an apple tree, I'm an apple tree," my question is, where are the apples? Let's see the apples.

Eventually, and there's a time, I get that there's a season. There's a season where you're waiting for the apples to show up. I know, I get it. But Jesus said, you abide in Me and let My Words abide in you, and you will bear much fruit. You will bear fruit. (John 15:4) And it's going to be a supernatural thing. And it proves our faith. It is the genuine proof, or, the proof of a genuine faith, if you will, that this obedience is going on in our lives.

I remember saying to my pastor when I just turned my life to the Lord at age 25. I had this passion to obey Him. And I just said,

"I just want to do what He wants for me to do.

And he just said,

"Yeah."

He looked at me and he goes,

"Yeah, that's a sign of your salvation."

It was that, just that passionate desire. I didn't even understand it at the time. But walking that out is proving our faith to be a genuine thing.