

The One Who Will Not be Shaken

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[0 : 0 0] your holy mountain. The one whose way of life is blameless, who does what is righteous, who speaks the truth from their hearts, whose tongue utters no slander, who does no wrong to a neighbor and casts no slur on others, who despises a vile person but honors 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 and who does not accept a bribe against the innocent. Whoever does these things will never be shaken. This is the word of the Lord.

Good evening. It's a great pleasure to be opening God's word. Let's pray before we look at this together. Lord, we thank you for this psalm that speaks about the incredible challenge and privilege of entering your presence. And so I pray that you'd help us not to take lightly your word and that we look, as we look at it together, we will learn from it and that the words that you would wish us to hear, we will hear. And we pray this in Jesus' name. Amen. Great. Well, if you keep your Bibles open, that would really help me. We'll be going back and forth a little bit, but starting, of course, with the psalm. So just to give you an idea of where we're going with this, we've got three main points that we'll be making. The second is a lot longer than the first and third. Okay, so just bear with me on that. Lots of subdivisions of the second. But three main points. So first off, we're going to be looking at David's rather depressing question. I started off with lots of alliteration with Ds, but it sort of falls apart towards the end. But at the moment, we've got David's depressing question. So I think one of the most stressful things you can do in life is buy a house and move in. Technically, that's true. If you've ever done this, you'll be well familiar with the mountain of paperwork, the proof of identity and income, endless organization and crushing uncertainty it can bring. Just before we bought our current home just over a year ago, I remember gazing longingly at the house and thinking, I find it hard to believe that this house could be our home by this time tomorrow.

There just seems to be an impossible list of requirements before we can walk through that door and know that we're legally entitled to be there. And David, who wrote this psalm, was a godly king of Israel. He knew the joy of serving his God wholeheartedly, and he knew the incomparable privilege of being in the presence of God. In David's time, being in the presence of God required much ritual and self-examination, because to enter God's presence lightly or inappropriately had dangerous consequences. Until the temple was built by David's son Solomon, God's people had been given a tent called the tabernacle, where God's presence would dwell in a special way. And to enter the most holy place required a highly complex ritual involving washing, animal sacrifice, incense that filled the tent and made it impossible to see the holy things within.

And even then, only the high priest could enter. And even then, only once a year. But even for God's people to enter the area around the tent or around the temple required much care.

It would have been normal at this time in history for people to ask the priest of any temple what ritual was required for them to enter. And so some people reckon that that's what's going on here, that the priest would then outline what's required. And in Psalm 15, we have this opening question, as if it's the people asking, well, what do I need to do to enter this temple? And the question that David asks is, Lord, who may dwell in your sacred tent? Who may live on your holy mountain? And the holy mountain, as far as we know, references the temple mountain Jerusalem. The question is not, how do I get into the most holy place? But simply, how can I live where God is? The language is not that of a yearly visit, but of a moving in, residing, and belonging. The answer, however, is, as discussed, somewhat depressing.

[4 : 3 2] Here's the answer. The one whose way of life is blameless, who does what is righteous, speaks the truth from their heart, and so it goes on, a list, a long list of requirements. And it's quite a list.

As we heard from Simon last week, if you were there or if you caught up in line, he was preaching on Psalm 14. And from Psalm 14, we know that David is by no means ignorant of the fact that we don't fulfill these criteria. But look back with me, actually, to Psalm 14, verse 2. Just back a few verses. Psalm 14, verse 2 says, the Lord looks down from heaven on all mankind to see if there are any who understand, any who seek God. All have turned away. All have become corrupt. There is no one who does good, not even one. To be with a holy, perfect God, we must be holy and perfect. If anyone less than perfect was to enter, it would contaminate it for everyone, like a single drop of poison in a cup of clean water. So there we have it. No one can enter God's presence. That's the answer to the question.

Not now, and not in eternity. And this would be a very sad ending to the story. But of course, for us, it is not the end.

Second point, and this is the long one. David's perfect descendant. I kicked off with David's defectless descendant, and then I thought, no, no, let's make it clearer. David's perfect descendant. So I'm going to go through this, and hopefully just point to how Jesus fulfills all the things which are mentioned here. There's an intriguing tension in the Psalms, and so many questions put to God are left unanswered. How long must we wait for justice? Why do the wicked prosper while good people suffer? And yet, simultaneously, we have the fervent prayers of, have mercy on me, Lord. I'm a wicked man, but don't punish me. So there's something humanly irreconcilable here. How can God bring swift justice to sinners, whilst also showing grace and mercy to those same sinners? Humanly, it's impossible. We see this demonstrated in politics, by the way, by the endless struggle between the so-called right and left. Broadly speaking, we all swing one way or the other, depending on whether we feel that justice or mercy should take priority. Both are important, and both are important to God.

[7 : 22] But the polarization between right and left proves that they can never be perfectly reconciled in this broken world. And the Psalms wrestle with this reality. And of course, more tension we find when we contrast, Psalms 14 and 15. There is no one who does good, and yet only those who do good can be with God. It is this tension that creates a sense of anticipation and even desperation for the promised Messiah who will bring balance. It is what the ancient Greeks called the logos, the word that is the way, the truth, and the life. And it's worth assuring one another that we're not simply reading our own experience backwards into the Psalms by saying this. I'll just give you one reference to prove this.

But turn with me to Luke 24, 44. You'll find that on page 36. No, that doesn't sound right. It's not page 36, is it? What was it? A thousand and 36? Anyway, it's Luke 24, 44.

Right, I have no idea why I wrote down 36. Sorry about that. I was only trying to be helpful with the page reference. Anyway, here we go. Luke 24, 44.

So this is what Jesus says to some of his disciples after he's risen from the dead. He said to them, This is what I told you while I was still with you. Everything must be fulfilled that is written about me in the law of Moses, the prophets, and the Psalms.

Then he opened their minds so they could understand the scriptures. Jesus really is in the Psalms. We're not just making it up. Furthermore, I read through any of the accounts of Jesus' life in the Gospels, make it clear that the Israelites were very much waiting for a promised Savior who would come to deliver them.

[9 : 16] They didn't all have it clear who that would be, but they were certainly waiting for someone. The Bible that they had was more or less our Old Testament, and it pointed towards a king who would be a descendant of David and would restore the fortunes of Israel.

And this is why the wise men from the east came to worship Jesus. Even beyond the borders of Israel, people were waiting with eager anticipation. Jesus Christ means Jesus the Anointed One. In the same way that David was anointed by the prophet Samuel to be king of Israel, Jesus, from David's royal line, was anointed by the Holy Spirit to be the king of everything.

We find in this Anointed One, someone who can at last fulfill the requirements of Psalm 15. So I hope to be able to prove that in all the ways that he can fulfill these.

Firstly, in godly action, godly words, godly affections, godly promises, and godly generosity. So let's first look at godly action. We won't spend very long on each of these, but just enough.

[10 : 23] So looking at verse 2, the one whose way of life is blameless, who does what is righteous, who speaks the truth from their heart. How does Jesus fulfill this?

Well, Jesus never sinned. In that sense, he was a unique human being. Even the criminal who was crucified beside him on the cross recognized that an innocent man was being killed. That's in Luke 23, 41.

You don't need to look it up. He says, We are punished justly, for we are getting what our deeds deserve. But this man has done nothing wrong. John 1, 17 tells us, For the law was given through Moses, but grace and truth came through Jesus Christ.

Referencing speaks the truth from their heart at the end of the verse 2 there. Jesus truly spoke the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth. He made many extraordinary claims on countless occasions, and highly intelligent people tried to make him out to be a liar.

None succeeded, and no one ever will succeed. For the truth that Jesus spoke was from the very heart of God. Jesus is the answer to every impossible question.

[11:35] Jesus is truth. Secondly, in godly words, have a look with me with verse 3 here. Whose tongue utters no slander, who does no wrong to a neighbor, and casts no slur on others.

We don't have every moment of Jesus' private life documented, obviously, but we can certainly derive from the way he speaks of the very worst, that he never sinned with his words. Even as he was being crucified, rather than cursing those who were killing him, Jesus prayed, Father, forgive them.

They don't know what they're doing. When the Pharisees tried to trap Jesus by asking if they should pay taxes to Caesar, they were sure they had him. If he said yes, it would be a slur on the Jews, by implying that the occupying Roman forces had a right to be there.

And if he said no, it would be a slur on the Romans, implying the Jews should challenge the authority of the government. It would be the equivalent of asking someone nowadays if Britain should be part of the European Union, or if Scotland should be independent, you'd be almost certain to divide opinion.

Of course, Jesus gives the perfect answer. Give to Caesar what belongs to Caesar, and to God what belongs to God. No provocation ever caused Jesus to utter slander.

[12:53] Thirdly, in godly affections, look with me at verse 4. Now, the despising a vile person here, it's not in a sense of feelings of hatred, those have already been condemned above.

It's more a question of allegiance. Jesus loves everyone, and shows no favoritism. Therefore, he has absolutely no hesitation in calling out those who would prevent others from following him.

He gives the scribes and Pharisees what for in Matthew 23, 13. But woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites, for you shut the kingdom of heaven in people's faces, for you neither enter yourselves nor allow those who would enter to go in.

Whoa. What a crushing judgment. There's no point in watering down what Jesus is saying to them. You lot are preventing honest folk from being saved.

That is despicable. It's vile. Conversely, so often, those whom the religious authorities rejected were honored by Jesus.

[14:09] Looking at the second part of the verse there. Whilst eating at the house of a prominent Jew called Simon, a woman rushes in and falls at Jesus' feet, wetting them with her tears and drying them with her hair.

This would have been utterly shameful thing to do in the culture. And Simon challenges Jesus on it. And Jesus gives this incredible response.

Then he turned to the woman and said to Simon, Do you see this woman? I came into your house. You did not give me any water for my feet, but she wet my feet with her tears and wiped them with her hair.

You did not give me a kiss, but this woman from the time I entered has not stopped kissing my feet. You did not put oil on my head, but she has poured perfume on my feet.

Therefore, I tell you, her many sins have been forgiven as her great love for me has shown.

[15:11] But whoever has been forgiven little loves little. We need to understand the culture a little to appreciate the amazing thing that Jesus is doing here. It really is.

Sorry if I get emotional. It really is amazing. He points out to Simon that he didn't offer any of these things that would have honored a guest in those days, washing their dusty feet, giving them a formal kiss, putting oil on their head.

In fact, it's possible that Simon had deliberately withheld these to slight Jesus. And so Jesus takes the dishonorable acts of the woman and with astounding, compassionate wisdom, he shows her

that her actions were honorable, that she provided a welcome that Simon failed to provide. and Jesus honors her for it. Fourthly, in godly promises, if you look with me at the verse, who keeps an oath even when it hurts and does not change their mind.

And surely there can be no oath that hurt more than that cruel cross. In the garden of Gethsemane, Jesus wept tears of blood and begged his heavenly father to take away the dreadful cup that he must drink.

[16:23] He asked that there might be another way, but there was no other way. And Jesus kept his oath until it was finished and did not change his mind.

And finally, in godly generosity, who lends money to the poor without interest? Verse 5 there, who does not accept a bribe against the innocent? Well, we don't know much about Jesus' financial situation, but we do know that he did much more than merely lending the poor money without interest.

The sacrifice of the cross paid the full ransom for our souls. In one of Jesus' parables, he tells the story of a servant being forgiven a debt of 10,000 talents.

And the significance of this parable is lost on us until we realize that a talent was about 20 years' wages. So when we work it out, the servant would have had to work 200,000 years to pay back what he owed.

We owe such a debt and Jesus has paid every penny. He doesn't want interest. He just wants us to follow his example of generosity.

[17:38] Third part. Dispensed with the Ds and we're just going to talk about Christ in us. Lord, who may dwell in your sacred tent? Who may live on your holy mountain?

Well, we have a new answer, don't we? Jesus and only Jesus. The psalm ends, whoever does these things will never be shaken. David knew that only a perfect person could enter God's presence.

But God, in his mercy, had provided, even in David's time, a means by which even sinful people could meet with God. This was the sacrificial system. Animals would be ritually killed as a reminder that our sins deserve death.

It pointed towards the real sacrifice of Jesus which dealt with the sin problem once and for all. As the old hymn says, because a sinless saviour died, my sinful soul is counted free.

For God the just is satisfied to look on him and pardon me. So where does that leave us today as we seek to enter God's presence?

[18:44] The sacrifice has been made. We commemorate this every time we celebrate communion together. The sin problem has been dealt with and yet things don't look that different yet.

Even if we have wholeheartedly given our lives to Christ and are trusting only him for our salvation, our lives still don't fulfill the criteria of Psalm 15. But the Bible reassures us that this is all part of God's big plan.

We live in a period of history Jesus calls the last days. God's mission to save humanity is almost complete but not yet. We're just awaiting the final and ultimate revelation, the return of Jesus. Until then, we're living in a broken world and still vulnerable to sin and temptation. If you're looking for perfection in this life, you won't find it.

But far from making us complacent about our behavior, it should inspire us to imitate the example of Christ. Look with me, if you would, at 1 Corinthians 15, starting on verse 53.

[19:55] That should be on page 1157. That sounds more likely. 1157. So Paul is assuring the Corinthian church that there really will be a physical resurrection.

Some were doubting this. And he says, no, it's integral to the Christian faith. Reading from verse 54 there. When the perishable has been clothed with the imperishable and the mortal with immortality, then the saying that is written will come true.

Death has been swallowed up in victory. Where, O death, is your victory? Where, O death, is your sting? The sting of death is sin and the power of sin is the law.

But thanks be to God. He gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ. And then verse 58.

How do we respond to this? Well, therefore, my dear brothers and sisters, stand firm.

Let nothing move you. Always give yourselves fully to the work of the Lord because you know that your labor in the Lord is not in vain. Why is our labor not in vain?

[21 : 15] Because this world is not our ultimate home. Jesus warns us that treasure in this world will not last, but treasure in heaven will last forever. When we follow the example of Christ, as this psalm describes in godly action, godly words, godly affections, godly promises, and godly generosity, we're aligning ourselves with the way of a kingdom that is imperishable and immortal.

If we're trusting in the sacrifice of Jesus, then that's where we're headed, into the very presence of God. Before the throne of God above, I have a strong, a perfect plea, a great high priest whose name is love, who ever lives and pleads for me.

My name is graven on his hands. My name is written on his heart. I know that while in heaven he stands, no tongue can bid me thence depart. Trust in Jesus, our great high priest to save you.

Then show him that your faith is in him and only him by following his teaching and example.

Whoever does these things will never be shaken. Amen.

Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.

[22 : 50] Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.

Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.