

## PURSUING THE PRESENCE OF GOD

THEME: Requirements for true worship  
TEXT: Psalm 15  
PROPOSITION: The key requirement for worship is holiness!  
INTRO:

- Psalm written by David when he moved the ark of the covenant from the house of Obed-edom the tabernacle which he had erected in Jerusalem! (I Chron. 15:1; 15:25-28; 17:1-3, 36).
  - Time of great joy – national revival
  - Ark had remained in house of Obed-edom relatively forgotten by the people
  - Ark was finally coming home
  - Renewed interest in tabernacle
  - Entire nation gathered to worship
  - Thousands at the tabernacle
  - Altar ran with the blood of the sacrifices
- As David saw the people worship and offer sacrifices – he knew that some were sincere and others were merely caught up with the thrill of the moment.
- Perhaps as he brought the ark into the tabernacle and watched as it was set in the holy of holies the empty longing – the deep desire of his heart – remained unsatisfied! Going back to his palace in the quiet of the evening the sweet psalmist of Israel penned the words to the 15<sup>th</sup> Psalm revealing the desperate desire of his heart – to discover the secret to true worship!

### I. **The Request: V1** - . . . Lord, Who shall abide in thy tabernacle? Who shall dwell in thy holy hill?

#### A. **Abide in your tabernacle:**

- Abide – sojourn, visit, abide for a time
- Tabernacle – tent/house. In this case the tabernacle was God’s tent/house. The place where God was.
- Lord, who can visit or abide in your house? Your dwelling place? Who is worthy to worship?

#### B. **Dwell in your holy hill?**

- This repeats the question in a slightly different manner. It is asking the same question but with a little different emphasis.
- **Dwell** – to inhabit, to occupy – very often used of long, permanent stays. Often used to describe God dwelling or inhabiting a location or place. It can sometimes indicate a closeness, or nearness of the person doing the dwelling.
- **Holy hill** – (mountain of your holiness) – could be the city where the tabernacle was to be set up = Jerusalem. Could be the promised Kingdom – who will live in the Kingdom you have promised to set up? Could be a reference to Heaven. Point is – the abode of God. The place where God is present!
- Not just who can visit your house – but who can dwell in nearness and fellowship – **who is worthy enough to permanently dwell in your presence?** (When someone dwelt in the tent of another – it implied favor, provision, and protection!)
- David is asking – What does a man have to do to dwell where you dwell? To permanently be a favored guest in the place where you dwell – be it the temple, kingdom, or heaven!  
**What do I have to do to pursue your presence?**

## II. The Response: V 1-5 (11 requirements – Holiness!)

3 are positive (things we are to do) and internal

8 negative (things we are not to do) and external

Requirements that deal with the Character (what a man is) and Conduct (what a man does) of the man that would pursue the presence of God!

11 Requirements that reveal **holy character** and **holy conduct**!

### A. Requirements of a Character: V2 (character must be Holy)

David records three overall requirements that must be true about the character of the man who would pursue the presence of God!

- These requirements deal with his relationship to God
- They deal with his character (what he is versus what he does)
- They are positive – things he must do
- They are internal
- If you desire a holy character, these three things must be true!

#### 1. His walk must be perfect:

- **Walk** – way of life, to order one's conduct
- **Upright** (perfect) – complete, whole, lacking nothing, sound. This word is often used in similar contexts to describe moral completeness. **His way of life is not deficient in God's sight.**

#### 2. His works must be righteous:

- **Work** – not normal word for work – it is a word that is often used to describe the moral actions of a man (the man doing wickedness).
- **Righteousness** – measuring up to the standard – just! (righteous scales)
- His moral actions are measuring up to God's standard! **His moral actions are approved by God!**

#### 3. His words must be reliable – true

- **True** – not just accurate – reliable, dependable (a dependable bridge versus an unreliable bridge)
- **In his heart** – inner man. This is the source of all that proceeds from a man's mouth. God is not so much interested in what you say to him with your mouth. He is interested in what you say to him with your heart – your inner man.
- **His inner thoughts and words are reliable and dependable before God!**

These character traits are **permanent traits** – (participles) – traits that are constantly a part of his life – things that are permanent and not something that is done just when the preacher is around!

The man who would pursue the presence of God must be perfect, complete – dependable in every are of his character. His walk, his works, and his words, must meet the standard of God's approval.

### B. Requirements of Conduct: V3-5 (conduct must be holy)

Not only does this psalm list the requirements of character but also the requirements of conduct.

- These are negative (what we are not to do) and positive (what we are to do).

- These are external – they can only be done effectively if the character is right.
1. **Right in his relationships** – to men!
    - a. **Backbiteth not** – from a word that means to “spy out!,” this is a reference to the man that is constantly looking for the faults and wrongs of others and is active in spreading them about! God said that the man who desired to pursue God’s presence will be a man who does not spy out and spread about the faults of others.
    - b. **doeth no evil** – does not purposefully engage in practices with the intent of hurting or inconveniencing other (he is not vengeful).
    - c. **does not take up a reproach** – Lit – does not life up – he does not readily accept something bad about another – constantly giving the benefit of the doubt. Eager to believe the good – slow to believe the bad! This is contrary to our nature – we are quick to judge – quick to accept an evil report – almost happy to hear something bad about another – The man who desires to be a permanent guest in god’s house does not do this!
  2. **Right in his associations/attitudes** toward men
    - a. **he despises** – rejects, looks away from those who habitually live in defiance to the Lord. He does not admire their lifestyle – he does not seek their favor – he does not fear to confront with truth! (this is what we need to do – yet we often fear them and sometimes even admire them.)
    - b. **he honors** those that fear the Lord!  
Honor – to make great – to hold in high esteem! His heroes are those that fear the Lord! Who are your heroes? Well preacher – of course my heroes are men that fear the Lord! What is a hero? A hero is someone that you want **more than anything else** to be like! In your daydreams – you desire to be like your hero! Who are your heroes? Who do you daydream about?
  3. **Right in his dealings with men**
    - a. **he is reliable** at all costs! His Word is Good! When he makes a promise and then discovers that it will disadvantage him to keep that promise – He keeps the promise! You are only as good as your word! When you say something, do it, even if it means being disadvantaged!
    - b. **He is not oppressive:** usury refers to the practice of those who would lend out their money to folks who were in misfortune at an interest rate that was unfair. It referred to those that took advantage of the misfortune of their brother in order to gain profit for themselves. The Lord allowed His people to lend out money and charge interest to other nations, but He would not allow that practice to go on among the people themselves! Why? Principle – not wrong to make investments that are fair and honest. It is wrong to take advantage of your brother’s misfortune for personal gain!
    - c. **He is unrepachable** – he will not accept anything that will color his judgment or dealing with another! He is fair!

### III. **The Result: V5c** ...He that doeth these things shall never be moved!

- This is the man who can permanently abide in the presence of God!
- The man who has right (holy) character – walk, works, words that meet God’s standard!
- The man who has right (holy) conduct to others – his relationships, his associations/attitudes, and his dealings with men reflect holiness before God!

- This man can permanently abide in the presence of God as his friend!

## CONCLUSION

Two responses of the worshippers:

- Some worshippers (unsaved) would say – it is **impossible to keep** these requirements – all of my sacrifices, all of my good intentions are worthless – NO ONE can ever be this holy! EXACTLY! That is the point – no one can ever hope to dwell with God because no one is holy enough to do so! **BUT** God made it possible for us to overcome his terrible truth! Jesus Christ is the only one who can make me holy enough to dwell with God! I can't dwell with God alone – but through the blood of Jesus Christ I can dwell with God.
- Other worshippers (Christians) say – I've already trusted Christ – therefore, it doesn't matter what I do – I don't need to pursue the presence of God – I automatically have it. This psalm tells the Christian that God has established certain requirements concerning the character and conduct of those who dwell with him! If you want to enjoy God's presence, then you must conform to God's requirements.

**Are you pursuing the presence of God?**