

Who Shall Stand?

Psalm 24

Series: Psalms

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Psalm 15 — **Call to Worship.**

Open your Bibles this evening to Psalm 24. Tonight, before we come to the Lord's Supper together, I want look briefly at this psalm. Here David asks an important question—one that every person will eventually face, whether in this life or in the next.

That question is: **Who shall stand before a holy and mighty God?**

In these verses, David not only asks the question; he also shows us the answer.

If you are taking notes, I will be dividing the psalm into five sections:

The God who reigns (1–2)

The Question: Who shall stand before this God? (3)

God's righteous requirements (4)

God's promise of blessing (5–6)

The King of Glory (7–10)

Let's begin by reading together the psalm.

A PSALM OF DAVID

Psalm 24:1	The earth is the LORD's and the fullness thereof, the world and those who dwell therein,
2	for he has founded it upon the seas and established it upon the rivers.
Psalm 24:3	Who shall ascend the hill of the LORD? And who shall stand in his holy place?
4	He who has clean hands and a pure heart, who does not lift up his soul to what is false and does not swear deceitfully.

5 He will receive blessing from the LORD
and righteousness from the God of his salvation.
6 Such is the generation of those who seek him,
who seek the face of the God of Jacob. Selah

Psalm 24:7 Lift up your heads, O gates!
And be lifted up, O ancient doors,
that the King of glory may come in.

8 Who is this King of glory?
The LORD, strong and mighty,
the LORD, mighty in battle!

9 Lift up your heads, O gates!
And lift them up, O ancient doors,
that the King of glory may come in.

10 Who is this King of glory?
The LORD of hosts,
he is the King of glory! Selah

This is the Word of the Lord—Thanks be to God.

Psalm 24 was likely composed to commemorate the event recorded in 1 Chronicles 13 and 2 Samuel 6. After David was anointed King and when he defeated the Philistines and captured the city of Jerusalem from the Jebusites in 2 Samuel 5, he celebrated God's victory by **bringing the Ark of the Covenant into Jerusalem**. Remember that in the Old Testament, the ark in the tabernacle was a testimony of God's presence with His people. And it served as a reminder to Israel that God is the One who saved them from their enemies, established them and provided all they needed. As we saw in our study of Psalm 87, Jerusalem or Zion became renown as the dwelling place of God.

But the Ark and the Tabernacle, with the sacrifices, celebrations and festivals in the Old Testament were always pointing to something greater. They gave God's people in the Old Covenant a glimpse of what God would one day do through Jesus on the cross.

Here in Psalm 24, in this celebratory song, we have an early presentation of the gospel. A clear picture of Christ, sung as Israel rejoiced that God was in their midst. God was not only just and holy, He was merciful, forgiving and gracious in His provision of salvation and life.

David begins this psalm, in verses one and two, by answering the questions:

Who is God? and Why should we serve Him?

In verse one he describes the world as God's possession.

God owns and is sovereign over all His creation.

Psalms 24:1 The earth is the LORD's and the fullness thereof,
the world and those who dwell therein,

David begins his answer to this in verse four by listing four qualifications:

Psalms 24:3 Who shall ascend the hill of the LORD?
 And who shall stand in his holy place?
4 He who has clean hands and a pure heart,
 who does not lift up his soul to what is false
 and does not swear deceitfully.

He gives here four qualifications of those who would approach God:

1. **Clean hands**

This demands outward purity; purity in our actions; purity in our activities.
Everything we do and make **MUST** be clean.
Everything we have and hold **MUST** be clean.
Every thing we grasp for and cling to **MUST** be clean

2. **Pure Heart**

This demands inner purity; purity in our thoughts and motivations.
Everything we think, every reason we have for doing what we do—it all must be pure.

3. **Does not lift up his soul to what is false**

This demands purity in our devotion to God alone. We are to have a heart and life committed to seeking and serving only God. The phrase “what is false” here refers to idols—vain things—empty things. Idols are lifeless and false. We are not to be ones who pursue idols or folly or have vain ambitions. The only way we can avoid pursuing what is false is to pursue God and His glory first in all things.

4. **Does not swear deceitfully**

This demands purity in speech; It demands that we do not speak lies, that we are not deceitful in what we say, but always speak the truth.

Now—all these are marks of holiness, without which no one will see the Lord (Hebrews 12:14). As we pursue holiness, as God commands us, and as God sanctifies us, and helps us grow in grace, we want these things to be true of us and more evident in our lives.

Having clean hands, having a pure heart, forsaking what is false for the pursuit of God, speaking the truth in love—God has command these things and we are created for them. They are a statement of His Law. We must have these if we are to serve Him and honor Him and love Him.

But it is here that we must stop a moment and make sure we grasp what this verse is really saying. This is showing us what qualifies us to come into the presence of God, what must be true in order for us to come and stand before the most Holy God.

Some have read this psalm, this far, and have come to an erroneous conclusion.

They read passages like this, that teach us God's Law, and they pare down its meaning and recast it into something they think they can attain. They pretend that they are better than they really are. — "God doesn't really mean perfection here... I'm not as bad as those people over there. Just look at all the good I am doing. Surely those good things about me will outweigh the bad."

But consider, what verse four presents to us. Clean hands, a pure heart, a life that does not pursue what is false, lips that speak only truth—these are God's high and holy standards for those who would draw near to Him.

But who can meet such qualifications? Who can attain such a high and perfect a goal?

If we honestly assess our own hearts and hands, who among us can say that we have:

clean hands?

that all we do and make and have and hold is clean?

a pure heart?

that all we think is pure, that our every motivation is right?

that we have not lifted up our souls in the pursuit of vain and false things?

that God and His glory are first in all things?

that we have spoken truth and not deceit?

This cannot describe us! David says in another Psalm:

Psalms 14:2–3 The LORD looks down from heaven on the children of man,
 to see if there are any who understand,
 who seek after God.
 They have all turned aside; together they have become corrupt;
 there is none who does good,
 not even one.

If this must be true of us, and we are left to ourselves to meet such demands—we can only despair as ones who have failed in every part and are judged to be unfaithful.

We are justly condemned in this not only by **what we do**—using our hands to do what we should not do; thinking what we should not think, saying what we should not say. BUT we are also condemned by all **we have not done**. Everything we should be doing, but fail to do—everything we should have said—everything we should have thought.

Were we to stand before God in judgment [outside the gracious provision of Christ]; we would see written against us a multitude of sins of which we never knew or acknowledged. The "handwriting of requirements written against us" (Colossians 2:14) would overwhelm us.

The psalm now gives direction for a musical interlude. The word SELAH provides a moment of reflection—a pause to stop and consider what has just been said.

Who **can** ascend into the hill of the Lord?

Again, in the context of the Old Testament, these were the qualifications for the priesthood. How could they enter the Temple in Jerusalem and worship the Holy God?

How are we, now in the New Testament, a people who are a kingdom of priests—how are we to come into the presence of a holy God?

Who **is** able to stand in His holy place?

Who has this salvation and righteousness from God?

In verse seven we learn the answer to David’s question from verse three.

Who has clean hands and a pure heart?

Who has not lifted up His soul toward vanity and what is false?

Who has always spoken the truth of God?

Look at who is seen in the last half of this psalm preparing to ascend into the presence of God.

Psalms 24:7 Lift up your heads, O gates!
 And be lifted up, O ancient doors,
 that the King of glory may come in.

Here the King of Glory approaches the gates of the holy city, Jerusalem.

Psalm 24:8 Who is this King of glory?
 The LORD, strong and mighty,
 the LORD, mighty in battle!

This is too good to sing only once. And so the chorus, with its question and answer, is repeated in verses 9 and 10:

Psalm 24:9 Lift up your heads, O gates!
 And lift them up, O ancient doors,
 that the King of glory may come in.
10 Who is this King of glory?
 The LORD of hosts,
 he is the King of glory! Selah

Who is the King of Glory?

It is our Lord Jesus Christ alone! We read God's declaration back in—

Psalms 2:6 "As for me, I have set my King
 on Zion, my holy hill."

Verses 7 and 8 of Psalm 2 continue —

Psalms 2:7 I will tell of the decree:
 The LORD said to me, "You are my Son;
 today I have begotten you.
8 Ask of me, and I will make the nations your heritage,
 and the ends of the earth your possession.

Christ is the King of Glory. He is the One who ascends into the presence of the Lord, to whom God the Father has given the nations as His inheritance.

Christ alone meets all the qualifications.

Only He has perfectly fulfilled the Law in perfect righteousness and can ascend the Holy Hill. Jesus Himself said to Nicodemus:

John 3:13 No one has ascended into heaven except he who descended from heaven, the Son of Man.

He alone has clean hands and a pure heart, free from idolatry.
He alone speaks only the truth.

We are told of Christ in—

Isaiah 53:9 they made his grave with the wicked
 and with a rich man in his death,
 although he had done no violence,
 and there was no deceit in his mouth.

He is the **Blessed One of God** to whom the multitudes would sing, as He entered the gates of Jerusalem in Matthew 21:9: "*Hosanna to the Son of David! Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord! Hosanna in the Highest!*"

It is Christ who went to the cross and became our salvation and our righteousness! It is Christ who entered the true temple not made with hands— the heavenly Temple— to make lasting atonement for our sins. It is His cross that has removed our guilt and shame.

Paul exclaims that God has forgiven us in Christ:

Colossians 2:14 by canceling the record of debt that stood against us with its legal demands. This he set aside, nailing it to the cross.

Jesus is our salvation, our Mediator. His righteousness alone is our provision.

Now in closing, let me give two brief comments by way of application.

- 1) For those who are here outside of Christ—I plead with you tonight to come to Christ. You will never, by your own works and efforts, meet the demands of God’s perfect and holy law. Your only hope is to find a righteousness not your own. Christ is that righteousness. In Him you can be forgiven of your sin and cleansed and given righteousness. In Him you can stand before God and fear no condemnation. Jesus is the only way, the only truth and the only life. If you are to stand one day before God—and you will—and not be crushed and condemned by your own sin and misery—you must have Christ. You must make His righteousness your own by faith and trust and rest in Him.

My prayer for you tonight, as you watch the testimony of God’s people, as we come to the Lord’s Supper, and declare together the sufficiency of His provision for us on the cross and our insufficiency in ourselves—my prayer for you is that you would see your need for Christ and for the righteousness that only He can give you, and that you would turn to Him in faith and repentance from sin, and find life.

- 2) For those who are here trusting and resting in Christ—my prayer for you is that stand fast in the gospel. As you came to Christ by the gospel, trusting fully in Him, so walk and serve Him by the gospel.

We do desire that God would work in us and produce in us clean hands, pure hearts, a steadfast soul and lips that speak truth— and this He does as He sanctifies and conforms us more and more to the image of His Son. But we are never justified by the work and the fruit produced in our lives—our standing before God is solely on the basis of Christ and His work for us.

And so because of Jesus, we don’t have to pretend that we are something we are not—we don’t have to pretend to be better than we are—we don’t have to pretend that we don’t struggle with sin. If we say we have no sin, we make God a liar. We cut ourselves off from the gospel and deny the very reason that Christ came to die on the cross. Because of Jesus we can acknowledge sin and confess our sin, and know that God is faithful and just to forgive us our sins. So I encourage you tonight to remember Jesus and remember what He has done to bring you near.

Tonight as we celebrate the Lord’s Supper, let me encourage you—**lift up your heads**. See the King of Glory entering into the presence of God for you. A perfect and holy sacrifice—crucified that we might be cleansed, rejected that we might be embraced, and risen again that we might have life and joy in abundance.

Let us pray.

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