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"*LORD, who may dwell in your sacred tent? Who may live on your holy mountain?*" Psalm 15:1

Main Idea: Who can enter God's House? Who can be His guest and stay for a while? Who can be in God's Holy Temple and worship Him there? Not only is there an entrance examination, there are qualifications for membership that few, if any, could ever pass. God looks into the heart for a proof of integrity and character; a fallen humanity cannot pass this examination. We would have to live earthly lives above all reproach and have perfect character. We would have to do what is right always and in all ways. We would have to live lives of complete truth—no falsehoods of any degree would be allowed—and that truth would have to flow from our hearts and minds in love. To pass God's entrance exam, we could not have the blemish of any gossip; we could not have spoken ill of anyone or mistreated anyone in any way. We would not be able to use foul language or curse others; we could not even despise others who do. We would be people who honor God and are in relationships with others who also honor God—no matter what. We would keep our word; do as we say and say as we do without wavering. We would treat all—especially those who can do nothing for us—with integrity and be merciful to all—especially those who cannot help themselves. We would even lend to others without dishonesty or being bribed; we would shame or guilt others nor would we carry our own shame. However, there is none among us who can claim this or pass God's examination on our own. Our sinful nature, our common breakdown prohibits us. However, as people of faith in Christ, we can honor God. When we honor Him, we walk with Him. When we walk with God, we can walk in integrity. In Him, we have eternal security, access to His Home for eternity.

Contexts and Background:

Psalm 15 is a liturgical song. It is called an "entrance liturgy", and it is about how we approach God in His Tabernacle (the tent dwelling prior to the Temple). In various forms, this was a common practice amongst many sacred places and cults in the ancient world, and it was important to know the conditions for a worshipper to gain admittance into the sanctuary. There were also the ethics for a Greek philosophical community. One would wait for a reply from the priest or leader. Usually, the answer was a list of rituals and requirements of what to bring. This complexity of rules, requirements, and laws were why many thought Jesus' teachings were too simple. Jesus requires *one thing*: A surrendered heart of faith in Him. This is the only way one comes before God; and, none can do this without the imputed righteousness of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ (Ex. 119:10-15; 1 Sam. 21:4; Psalm 24:3-6; Isa. 33:14-17).

This Psalm is also about righteousness and ethics. This is about what a true believer needs to be on the inside, which will affect how one is on the outside. Priests were not allowed to approach God with wrong attitudes, for personal gain, or as a mere ceremonial act; rather, they were to approach with hearts of virtue (Lev. 10; 22:2). For us, it is how we worship and treat God with a pure heart and how God desires us to be to others, as our personal agendas will cloud His work in us (Psalm 1; 24:3-6; 33:14-16).

Many commentators have noticed that the epistle of James is a succession of sermons based on Jesus' own words and Psalm 15. These are about the ethics of a true follower of God. If God redeems, how do I live?

Commentary—Word and Phrase Meanings:

- *Who may dwell / reside / sojourn.* To stand as a 'sojourner' or stranger in a place that is only temporary. The Tabernacle was God's earthly dwelling place prior to the Temple being built; this was about God dwelling amongst man, being with them. This was to show the Promised Land was not just about the possession of the land; rather, it was about God possessing our hearts and minds. We cannot possess God. It is He who desires to possess us. It is about being humble, so we are

dependent upon Him and His dwelling amongst us, as we are full in Him. Here it is God as humanity's host that asks us to come worship; it is a personal encounter with God (2 Chron. 7:1-18; Eph. 2:16; Col. 1:19-23; 1 Tim. 2:5; Heb. 1:8)!

- *Come into your house.* An expression to come and worship God, asking for permission to enter His Holy Sanctuary and presence with all of our reverence and awe. We come into God's house, not by our efforts or birthright or deeds of righteousness, because we cannot do enough to make it. Rather, we come with His righteousness imputed to us, by His grace (1 Sam. 1:7; 2 Sam. 12:20; Psalm 5:1-7; 24; 23:6; 27:4-6; 61:4; 84:10; Isa. 33:14-17; Matt. 5:20-48; 22:37-40; Rom. 3:21-22; 4:22-25 1 Cor. 1:30; 2 Cor. 5:21; Eph. 4:14).
- *Sacred tent.* The tabernacle, the tent sanctuary built by Moses, for God dwelling with His people. Meaning the "Most Holy Place," the "holy of holies" or holy things, referring to the Old Testament tent meetings where one met with God. This was the only way sinners could approach our Holy God and receive forgiveness; it was replaced by Solomon's Temple and is now replaced by Christ (Lev. 16:13-15, 34; Heb. 7:25; 8:1-13).
- *Live on.* Meaning, "who is qualified or entitled to be here"?
- *Holy mountain / hill.* Refers to the hill on the north side of Jerusalem, where the temple stood in the royal city. "Zion" and "holy hill" are also synonyms for Jerusalem and God's dwelling that pointed to Heaven. This is not about size or location; rather, it is where God chose to reveal Himself and rule (2 Chron. 33:15; Psalm 2:6; 3:4; 15:1; 43:3; 46:4).
- *Walk is blameless / spotless.* Meaning wholehearted and sound as we live according to His requirements, also to be at *peace with God*. This is a picture of a person of integrity and honor, who loves God and, as a result, treats others without arrogance as a response to Who and What God has done for them. For the Christian, this means we can have peace with God as a result of being justified by faith because of Christ; therefore, we can be good, do good, and be happy as a result (Gen. 17:1; Psalm 4:7; 119:11; Rom. 5:1; 1 Cor. 3:10-15; 2 Cor. 5:10; 1 Pet. 1:19; 2 Pet. 3:14-18).
- *Righteous / does what is right.* Our right walk with God gives us real self-fulfillment and an ethical system to live by with the willingness to be good to others.
- *Speaks the truth.* What is trustworthy and correct, not a half-truth or manipulation. What we say and do is from who we are (Psalm 12:2; Isa. 29:13).
- *Heart.* The inner being of who we are; it is from our spirit or soul that our emotions, thoughts, and motivations come. And, our unshakable confidence in God (Psalm 32:7-9; 34:1-8; Prov. 4:23; 15:13; John 15:11; 17:13; 2 Cor. 12:9; 1 Peter 4:13-19; 1 Thess. 5:18; James 1:1-4; Heb. 10:34).
- *Tongue.* Here is what we say and our ability to control our thoughts and resulting words. The tongue is an offensive weapon for hostile striking and just as lethal as a sword (Psalm 5:9; 10:7; 12; 17; 25; 27-28; 31; 35; 41; 52; 54-57; 59; 64:3-4; 63-64; 71; 86; 109; 140-141; Rom. 3:13).
- *Slander / backbitten.* Meaning to go around and spy on someone to use the information against them or spread information that is false or unverified in order to create a scandal (Gen. 42:9; Lev. 19:16).
- *Does no wrong to a neighbor / friend.* This is about another person outside of your immediate family. We should carry our loyalty to others, not only those whom we like, love, and/or are related to. We are to show impartiality; be fair in all dealings.

- *Slur on others / reproach.* Being disreputable or making it seem as though another is discreditable (Prov. 10:12).
- *Despises a vile person / eyes a vile person is contemned.* Does not show favoritism or respect to anyone based on wealth, position, or power. Does not support or like someone of bad character; rather, supports justice, honesty and truth (Psalm 1:1).
- *Honors / allegiances.* Meaning to be loyal and truthful while not comparing oneself to others (Gen. 14:17-24).
- *Fear the LORD.* This epic statement of faith means to trust, revere, serve, place first and foremost and worship God as LORD of all. Then, live life as it relates to faith and honor to God. To follow His will (Gen. 20:11; Deut. 6:4-5; Psalm 27:1; Matt. 6:19-24, 33; John 10:22-42).
- *Keeps an oath / swears to his own hurt.* Meaning, being reasonable and honest about where one stands on issues of right-thinking and reason while admitting mistakes (Prov. 6:1-5; 2 Cor. 1:15-23).
- *Change their mind.* A person who is right with God will fulfill their word.
- *Lends money.* This means to be generous. In context, this also means one's ability, account ledgers, and prosperity in the world's eyes do not govern one's call and mission.
- *Without interest / usury.* Meaning unlawful or excess interest, extortion, or to take advantage or profit from another's misfortunes. The family and clan were responsible for the care of widows, orphans, and the poor as was the greater Jewish community. Jews could lend money to foreigners and seek interest, but not to their fellow Jews (Ex. 23:9; Lev. 19:33; 25:35-38; Deut. 23:19-20; Matt. 25:27).
- *Bribe.* The godly person stands in Truth and conviction in God, not in siding with those in power or have money (Psalm 16:8; 46:5; 62:2-6).
- *Never be shaken / moved / place assured.* Move means "make him go away," hear from God. Those who have a steadfast trust in God have the conviction of trust in God, so one's faith will not be moved no matter what. This brings about a faithful attitude, so doubts and circumstances do not rule over. Insecurity is a prime human dilemma (Psalm 10:6; 13:4; 30:6).

Devotional Thoughts and Applications:

The wondrous privilege we have is that because of Grace, we may be able to " *dwell in the Lord's Sanctuary*" and place our home "*on His Holy Hill.*" But, what good will it be if we do not show our gratitude and obedience to what God has done by living out His principles?

This Psalm is a crucial image of how we are to approach God and how we are to live our lives (Col. 1:1-8). It is a template for an honorable person's life and work. It is a template for all Christians on how we approach God and life with others! This Psalm is also an excellent way to analyze to see if Christ is indeed working in you. Do you wonder if you are really learning and receiving His Truth? Do you wonder if you are really willing and able to impart His Word, Fruit, and Character to others, as we have been called to? Psalm 15 needs to impact you; seek to memorize and live by! This is the Psalm for the Christian who is real, authentic, and desires to glorify our Lord, model His precepts, and impact others. These are the traits of faith that will produce results in a life that is victorious and impacting (Phil. 1:6; 3:7-11; 4:4-9). Being willing and able to develop our faith and Christian walk will help, along with the empowerment of the Holy Spirit, to build our maturity and character and church (Gal. 5:22-23; 2 Pet. 1:5-11).

Christian Life Principle: When we praise Christ as Lord, we will model His love to others and live by godly principles to those around us! Such as living for righteousness and truth, exhibiting good ethics, integrity and honesty, controlling our tongue, being generous and humble, while not being corrupt or manipulative. We will not be influenced by power or position of self or of others. A real person of faith, especially a church leader, must follow these principles from a heart and a desire to please God, resulting from the work of the Holy Spirit within. A pretender or false Christian will not exhibit these characteristics either publicly or privately!

The Essential Inductive Questions (for more Inductive questions, see Inductive Bible Study):

1. What does this passage say?
2. What does this passage mean?
3. What is God telling me?
4. How am I encouraged and strengthened?
5. Is there sin in my life for which confession and repentance is needed?
6. How can I be changed, so I can learn and grow?
7. What is in the way of these precepts affecting me? What is in the way of my listening to God?
8. How does this apply to me? What will I do about it?
9. What can I model and teach?
10. What does God want me to share with someone?

Additional Questions:

1. Have you ever thought about ethics? If God redeems, how do I live? How is this Psalm about ethics?
2. How do you feel when a Christian is dishonest or gossips to or about you? Why is this bad?
3. How well can you relate to these principles from Psalm 15? Are they realistic and practical for you, for today? Why, or why not?
4. Read James 2:14. Compare and contrast with Psalm 15. How do they differ? How are they the same?
5. Some Christians put their emphases on what they believe, while others emphasize on how they are to behave. What are the values of belief and knowledge, and how does this relate to how we react in life?
6. How can your growth in faith impact your character and then impact your church, and then impact your community?
7. Look at each of these ten plus principals, how have you applied these to yourself, your family, your friends, your church, and people in general?
8. What happens in your life when we are not following these or other godly principles?
9. Which of the stanzas of Psalm 15 strike at you so that you need to deal with it in your own life? When, and how will you?
10. What can we learn about how we worship and treat God? What is a pure heart and why does God desire us to have it and be so to others? How do our personal agendas cloud His work in us?
11. Our focus must be on edifying and encouraging. So, what can you and your church do to make this a priority?
12. How can you improve your spiritual walk so you can be the person who models Psalm 15?