

The Perfect Man

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[0 : 01] Well, let's open up our Bibles to Psalm chapter 15 this morning. Psalm chapter 15, if you don't have your Bibles with you, that's okay.

We got them there in the seat back in front of you. But let's open them to Psalm chapter 15. And when you found it, let's stand in honor of the reading of God's Word. Psalm chapter 15. A Psalm of David.

O Lord, who shall sojourn in your tent? Who shall dwell on your holy hill? He who walks blamelessly and does what is right and speaks truth in his heart.

Who does not slander with his tongue and does no evil to his neighbor. Nor takes up a reproach against his friend. In whose eyes a vile person is despised, but who honors those who fear the Lord.

Who swears to his own hurt and does not change. Who does not put out his money at interest. And does not take out a bribe against the innocent. He who does these things shall never be moved.

[1 : 13] The grass withers, the flower fades, but the Word of our Lord stands forever. Let's pray. Lord, thank you for your Word. Thank you for the truth of the Gospel.

Thank you for the promise that it never goes out empty, but always accomplishes the purposes for which you send it. And so we pray now, Lord, as we open your Word and seek you in it, God.

Would you give us eyes to see and ears to hear and hearts to receive the truth of the Gospel and the glory of your kingdom. We pray in Jesus' name. Amen. You can be seated.

Amen. Amen. Amen. Well, I heard somebody complain recently that he thought that maybe 90% of the women in the world were seeking to date the top 10% of men.

And he was lamenting what he felt like were the unrealistic expectations of single women in their pursuit of the perfect man. And in their minds, according to him, he said that top 10% of men is at least 6 feet tall.

[2 : 16] That rules me out, right? Is attractive, makes at least 6 figures, is physically fit, and of course is within a reasonable age range available for them to date.

Well, I was curious about this, and so I did a little bit of research this week. And while I hate to burst anyone's bubble, if these are your standards, I got bad news for you this morning. According to my in-depth research into U.S. Census Bureau data, only about 14.5% of American men are 6 feet tall or taller, which interestingly enough, 33% of U.S. men self-identify as being 6 feet tall or taller.

So somebody's lying. Only 14.5% are 6 feet tall or taller. Only 17% of all American men make 6 figures or more. And that's before you get to preferred age or attractiveness, which of course is hard to quantify.

But when you combine all of these factors together, the statistical probability of a guy in the U.S. male population between the ages of 20 and 40 meeting all of these standards, you ready?

1.4%. It's not great, right? But of course, that's all men. And you might want one that's not already married. So when you trim out all of the already married men, trim it down to just a single man, here's what you get.

[3 : 42] A man who is at least 6 feet tall, who makes at least 6 figures income, who is between the ages of 20 and 40 years old, who is not statistically obese, and is not statistically married currently, the probability of a guy in the U.S. population meeting all of these standards, you ready for it?

0.48%. The truth is, the perfect man is hard to find. There is a significant gap between the high standards and the number of people who actually qualify, which is, in a way, the same predicament that faces us here in Psalm chapter 15.

David, here in Psalm chapter 15, he asks the question, what kind of person is God looking for? Who gets to be with God?

What are God's standards? And the answer that he gives, it might surprise you in verses 2 through 5, the answer is, only perfect people. Only perfect people get to be with God.

There is a significant gap between God's high standards and the number of people who actually qualify. So what we're going to see this morning here is the question, verse 1, and then the qualifications, verses 2 through 5.

[5 : 09] The question, verse 1, and then the qualifications, in verses 2 through 5. First, we see David asks this question here in verse 1. Look there with me.

He asks, O Lord, who shall sojourn in your tent? Who shall dwell on your holy hill? In other words, who is worthy to come and to be in your presence?

What kind of person are you looking for? And those two terms that he gives, that you may realize this or not, they're loaded with biblical imagery and significance.

He asks, Who shall sojourn in your tent? And if you're not familiar with the Old Testament, you might wonder, well, why in the world is God living in a tent? Right?

But of course, we know that God did, in fact, live in a tent. He condescended to dwell in a tent, to be in the midst of his people in the tabernacle. The tabernacle was God's tent, his dwelling place with his people as they traveled and sojourned on the way to the promised land.

[6 : 13] So when he asks, O Lord, who can sojourn in your tent? Another way to ask that question might be, God, who is worthy to be your people? God, who is it who can be with you?

Who is it who can claim to have you in their midst? And that's a pressing question for us, isn't it? Because we as Christians claim to be, what? God's people.

As we gather here this morning, we claim to have God in our midst. It's pressing for us to ask the Lord, who is worthy to be your people?

Not only this, he asks, who shall dwell on your holy hill? That's a phrase that is just loaded with biblical meaning. Who shall dwell on God's holy hill?

You might think of the Garden of Eden. In fact, in Ezekiel chapter 28, he describes the Garden of Eden as being on God's holy hill.

[7 : 12] The Garden of Eden, where for just a brief moment, Adam and Eve tasted true intimacy with God. They enjoyed nearness with Him and communion with Him for all of two chapters in the Bible.

Before sin entered into the world and tore it all apart, Adam and Eve listened to the eyes of the enemy. They disobeyed the clear command of God. They broke fellowship with the Lord.

They were cast out of the Garden. You know what we call this? We call it the fall of mankind, where they were cast down the mountain, away, down, away from the presence of God.

And from this point forward, the entire Bible is asking the question, who can ascend back up this hill? Who is it that can be with God?

How do we get back to Eden, back to the fellowship with the Lord? And it seems like an impossible task. But all through the Old Testament, you get these little glimpses and glimmers of possibility that maybe there's a way.

[8 : 13] You might think of Moses, who rose to the top of Mount Sinai to meet with the Lord. God called him up the mountain. No one else is allowed up the mountain.

If they even touch the mountain, you know what happens? You remember? They'll die. But God invites Moses up and he comes up and he meets with God. And then you remember what happens? He comes back down the mountain to deliver God's word, the law to the people.

The word of God comes down from up high to give life to his people. That's Moses. You might think of David. God's anointed king, reigning and ruling over God's people, God's anointed leader, who, Psalm chapter 2, you remember, it says, I have set my king on Zion, my holy hill.

All through the Old Testament, there's glimmers of possibility, but the problem remains, no one is worthy to climb up that hill and stay there. Moses comes and Moses goes.

David comes. David goes. Adam was there for a moment and he fell away. The question remains, who can climb the hill and be with God?

[9 : 26] And the fact is, all of us are asking this question. All of us are asking this question. Every single world religion seeks to answer this question.

How do we as men and women get to be with God? Every religion has their own spin on the answer, but if you listen closely, they are all essentially the same. How do we get to be with God?

Buddhists, a little world religion 101, okay? Buddhists are pursuing heaven. They call it nirvana. And how do they get there? By following the eightfold path.

Right resolve, right view, right speech, right conduct, right livelihood, right effort, right mindfulness, right samadhi, or meditative absorption. Once he got all that down, then, they say, then your spirit will return to God.

Islam teaches that in order to be saved, you must follow the five pillars. And there's a sort of cosmic scale of good and bad. If all of your good deeds in your life outweigh all of the bad, then you are accepted.

[10 : 29] Hinduism teaches that you reach salvation when you break free of the cycle of reincarnation. Reincarnation. And then, your spirit becomes one with God. Well, how do you break free from the cycle of reincarnation?

You gotta get rid of bad karma by doing everything needed to fully satisfy the gods. And so you keep coming back again, and again, and again, and again, working it all out until finally you get it right.

Are you sensing a theme here? Do you hear the common theme? Mormons actually believe in two heavens. And to reach the first, the lower heaven, you just have to believe in Jesus and be baptized, but to reach the higher heaven, you have to believe in Jesus, repent, be baptized in the church, be a member of the Mormon church, receive the Holy Spirit, not by faith in Christ, but by laying on of hands, and then you have to fully obey all of God's commands and the Mormon word of wisdom, which by the way, was written in 1833, not sure how anyone was saved before that, and they must complete all the Mormon temple rituals.

Okay, lots of stuff to do, right? Catholics, Council of Trent declared that you are saved by faith plus works. That is how one receives salvation.

Now you tell me, think about it, what do all of these religions have in common? What's the common thread? What are you hearing? Every single one of them is a system of do's and don'ts so that you, by your efforts, can climb up the hill.

[12 : 08] Every single one of them is dependent on you. It comes in all shapes and sizes, but the summary of all world religions is be good, do good, live the right way, belong to the right group, check the right boxes, and then and only then can you make your way up the hill to be with God.

They all ask the question, O Lord, who shall sojourn in your tent? Who shall dwell on your holy hill? And they all say, I can. I can.

Maybe not now, but if I work hard enough, if I put in enough effort, if I do the right things, if I say the right things, if I'm devoted enough, if I'm genuine enough, if I'm repentant enough, if I'm enough, I can do it.

Every religion, except for one, is providential, I think, that Psalm 15 comes right after Psalm 14. Do you notice the connection?

Look there, Psalm 14. That's not accidental, by the way. Do you remember what we saw last week? Thank you for coming back after last week, by the way. Psalm 14 was tough. We got some bad news in Psalm 14.

[13 : 18] Last week, Psalm 14, what did David teach us? He said, God looks down. God is on high, looking down from heaven, down to see if there are any who understand, any who seek after God, any who does what is good.

Is there anyone who's worthy to dwell in this tent or to climb up this holy hill and to be with me? And what was the answer? Not even one.

Christianity says, Christianity says, you can't do it. Who can sojourn? Who can be with God? Who can dwell in God's tents? Psalm 14 already ruled us out.

It's not you. It's not me. The point is, again, there is a significant gap between God's high standards and the number of people who actually qualify.

So then, what are God's standards? Who can be with God? Look with me, starting in verse 2. We'll see second. The qualifications, verses 2 through 5.

[14 : 21] Look there with me. These are God's requirements. I remember when I was in school, sometimes the teachers would post the grades online before you actually got your physical test paper back.

And so you would know if you failed the class before you knew what the right answers were. Right? Psalm 14 says you failed the class. Psalm 15 tells us here's what you should have done.

The first one, first qualification here is the summary right there in the first line, verse 2. Who can be with God? He who walks blamelessly and does what is right.

The qualification number one, be blameless. Be a perfect man. Not just mostly good, but be totally blameless. This man, second, must be perfectly truthful.

He speaks the truth, not just out loud, but in the hidden conversations of his own heart. And again, you notice the contrast with Psalm 14. In 14, the fool says where? In his heart, there is no God.

[15 : 24] That fool, he goes and does abominable deeds. But Psalm 15, the contrast, this man, this blameless man, speaks truth in his heart. And he does what is right.

Not only this, he must love his neighbor perfectly. Verse 3. He does not slander with his tongue and he does no evil to his neighbor, nor does he take up a reproach against his friend.

He perfectly loves his neighbor. Jesus told us the summary of the law, the two great commandments. You remember what they were? The first is, you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and mind and soul and strength.

And the second is like it, you should love what? Love your neighbor as yourself. But then he goes further and he exposes the depth of the law.

He says, you've heard it said don't kill, but I say to you, if you hate somebody in your heart, you've already killed them. You've heard it said don't commit adultery, but I say to you, if you even look at a woman with lustful intention, you've already committed adultery with her in your heart.

[16 : 28] He makes it clear that loving your neighbor is not just checking off the boxes of the law. It's much deeper than this. And here, David tells us the person who can climb the hill and be with God perfectly loves his neighbor.

Have you done it? Not only this, verse 4 shows us he must perfectly value God's honor above all else. In his eyes, a vile person is despised, but he honors those who fear the Lord.

In other words, his metric for who deserves honor and praise and respect is not the same as our world's system of honor and praise and respect. He doesn't just honor somebody who might benefit him in some way.

His honor is not based on money or power or status or ability to contribute something valuable. He sees and he values as God sees and God values.

And God's honor is his highest value. Do you see it? He must have perfect integrity. Verse 4 This man, he swears to his own hurt.

[17 : 39] He does not change. His word is trustworthy. He doesn't say one thing and then go back and do another. He doesn't change the terms of his agreements. He doesn't promise something and then fail to follow through.

He is 100% trustworthy and honest. And then lastly, verse 5 tells us This man must perfectly steward all of his treasures. He doesn't put out his money at an interest or take out a bribe against the innocent.

He isn't greedy or dishonest. He's not manipulative. He is above reproach with his money. He perfectly manages all that God has given him.

He who does these things shall never be moved. Have you done them? Does this describe you? Who can sojourn in your tent?

Who can dwell on God's holy hill? We sum up the answer like this. Only a perfect man. Only a perfect man can be in the presence of a holy God.

[18 : 41] You see the predicament that this puts us in? Psalm 14 and Psalm 15 back to back they put us in a pretty terrible position don't you think? Psalm 14 again says no one is good not even one and Psalm 15 says to be with God you must be perfect.

And if that's how it is I can only think of three ways to make sense of it. Okay? Follow with me here. Three ways to make sense of this. Option number one nobody gets to be with God.

Nobody gets to be with God. That's possibility number one. And let me be clear option number one is perfectly just. That would be perfectly fair because again no one meets the qualifications.

No one is owed access to God. We have all sinned and fallen short. Even if you live a perfect life from this moment on you can't change the fact that you've already failed Him. Who can be with God?

Someone who is perfect. No one is perfect so none of us get to be with God. That's option number one. Or option number two is maybe maybe God just lowers His standards a little bit.

[19 : 50] I mean my goodness. Maybe He realizes after years and years and years and years goes by and nobody's able to meet this standard. Maybe He says I love you so much and I want to be with you so badly that I will just lower my standards so that you can come and be with me.

That's option number two. And if that's how it works we can just rip this page out of our Bibles. Option number two is wishful thinking. God does not lower His standards for us.

God's standard is holy perfection which leaves us with option number three. God is holy. God's standard is perfection. We have all fallen short but option number three God Himself makes a way to make imperfect people perfect.

You hear that? God Himself makes a way to take imperfect sinful broken people like you and me and make us perfect righteous holy and acceptable in His sight.

Option number three praise God is the message of the gospel. That's the message of Christianity. This is what we believe and this is the good news that we have to share with the world.

[21 : 12] We all ask who can qualify? Who can come and be in the presence of God? Every other religion gives you a ladder to climb. Christianity alone says you can't do it.

Here's the standard. You can't meet it. No one is good enough. All have sinned but here's the good news of the gospel. God makes sinful people perfect. How does He do it?

By sending His own Son to live and to die and to rise in the place of sinners like us. Here's the gospel church. God Himself has stepped down into human flesh to meet the standard of perfection in our place.

Jesus Christ is the only one who's perfectly fulfilled every requirement to total perfection. You read this list I want you to see Jesus.

Jesus is the only one who is ever perfectly blameless. Jesus is the only one who did what was right who spoke the truth with His lips and with His heart who was Himself the very embodiment of the truth the living word of God.

[22 : 20] Jesus Himself perfectly loved His neighbor. Greater love has no man than this that a man should lay down his life for his friend. Jesus Christ alone perfectly honored God the Father.

Jesus Christ alone was and is perfectly deserving of all honor and praise Himself. Jesus Christ alone lived with perfect integrity. Jesus Christ alone perfectly managed and cared for all that God the Father had given Him most specifically His precious people.

So what's the answer to the question? Who can sojourn in God's tent? Who can climb the hill and be with the Lord? It's Christ alone. Jesus Christ alone can ascend the hill of God.

Jesus Christ alone is the perfect man and the wonderful news of the gospel is that He did this for us on our behalf.

That His obedience and His righteousness and His perfection is credited to our bankrupt account by faith alone.

[23 : 29] Other religions don't understand why we make such a big deal about Jesus. They say He's a good teacher or a prophet or a good example a moral example.

He sacrificed Himself out of love for others. They don't understand why we make such a big deal about Jesus. Listen to this. We worship Jesus Christ because we believe that Jesus is the true and better Adam who lived and obeyed perfectly in our place where Adam failed.

Romans 5.19 Paul says for as by the one man's disobedience the many were made sinners that's Adam were made sinners in Him by His disobedience so by the one man's perfect obedience Christ the many will be made righteous.

Not only this we believe Jesus is the true and better Moses who like Moses ascended to the top of a mountain where He delivered His most famous sermon the sermon on the mount this was His exposition of the law of God we believe Jesus is the true and perfect mediator between God and man who is Himself the very word of God who came down to His people not just to instruct but to fulfill all that God requires.

We believe Jesus is the true and better David the true eternal King of His people whom God has set atop His holy hill to reign and to rule to bless His people and to crush His enemies we believe Jesus is the only hope for sinners like us to be with the holy God why?

[25 : 12] because we believe that this man stepped down into our weakness to live as we should have lived and then he went atop another hill to die as we should have died but not just to die but to rise and then to ascend do you see it?

to ascend into the presence of God to ascend to the right hand of God to represent sinners like us before the throne of God so that any sinner who comes to this perfect man by faith may receive by grace what he alone has accomplished that's the gospel that's very good news for sinners like us Jesus alone is worthy and by God's grace God makes sinners worthy in him option number three praise God is the truth it's entirely unique to the Christian message the only hope that we have that we could possibly be with God is that God himself makes a way to make imperfect people perfect so the question then becomes church have you received it?

have you received it? if you read this psalm and you ask that question you ask who can be with God and you answer it like this well I do my best I try pretty hard I come to church I say my prayers I tithe I'm pretty moral surely God would accept me if that's how you answer that question you are not answering it like a Christian the Christian answer to that question is I am not worthy only Christ but praise God by his grace I trust Christ alone for my salvation and I am made worthy in him I'm made righteous in Christ alone have you received it?

if so then let me just encourage you to respond in a couple of ways here as we close for one realizing the distance between God's requirements and our qualifications church ought to lead us to deep humility deep humility to recognize that we did not earn anything from God all that we have all that we have is by grace alone that ought to make us humble it ought to make us rejoice church and to give thanks to God for what he's done for us in Christ as we read at the beginning of our time this morning he saved us not because of works done by us in righteousness but because of his great mercy by the washing and renewal of the Holy Spirit by grace you have been saved through faith this is not your own doing Paul says not by works so that no man may boast church rest and rejoice in what God has done for you in Christ and then and only then from this position of full acceptance in Christ from this position of how God sees you and receives you totally in Christ then and only then look at this gap between

God's holiness and your sinfulness as a means to grow in Christ likeness you are holy in Christ you have been justified now God is working holiness in you God is making you holy in Christ you are being sanctified so we can look to this passage and ask what does it look like for me to grow as one who is totally accepted in the sight of God as one who is totally loved in the sight of God as one who is totally made perfect my standing is secure how can I grow in holiness and Christ likeness maybe you need to grow to resemble Christ with your words maybe we need to grow to love our neighbor as ourself maybe we've not walked in integrity maybe we've been greedy or stingy with what God has given us what does it look like for you to put off the old self and to put on the new self which is being renewed in knowledge after the image of his creator church we're going to stand and respond by singing in just a moment but what

[29 : 43] I want to do is pray as we close and respond we'll have a moment of silent prayer and then I'll pray over us and we'll stand and sing let's pray silently where we are father we read a text like this and see the standards that you have that only perfect people are received in your sight and we realize lord and confess all of us have fallen short all of us in many ways have sinned against you father this is what makes the good news of what you've done for us in Christ so good god

Christ has done it all and we simply receive what he's done by faith alone we praise you for that good news and we pray lord if there are any who are still working their way to you if there are any who are still burdened by the constant pressure to climb their way to god lord would you open their eyes this morning to recognize they can't do it but christ has done it for them to simply be received by faith alone we pray that you would put in their hearts trust in christ this morning and god would you deepen our faith in jesus would you rid us of our works reliance and our works righteousness would you rid us of all of our tendency to try to earn our status before you and god would you remind us of the deep deep love that you have for us in christ we pray all this in jesus name amen