

Our Christian Psalms ~ 15

Psalm 15 - Who Will Be In Heaven?

“LORD, who shall abide in thy tabernacle? who shall dwell in thy holy hill?” (v:1).

Lodging as an honoured guest in God's tabernacle (His worshiping church in its pilgrimage through this present evil world) is a wonderful privilege. The church is where Jehovah abides with his saints to bless them with grace in and through Jesus Christ. But to settle into heaven (to dwell) as a joint heir with Christ with our Father - in eternal, perfected fellowship and enjoyment of His infinite perfections - that is an altogether magnificent hope! What could grip our interest more than God's answer to this question: “Who will be in heaven with God?” What more blessed, dear reader, than to say with assurance, “I shall be among them.”

We don't find a list of names in the Bible of those who will be in heaven. God is wiser than to give things that would lead us not to take seriously our own lives and duty to him. Rather God moves David to describe the kind of people that will be in heaven - he distinguishes them by their spiritual characteristics from those who will not be there. In so doing, God shows us that those who will be in heaven can be known, and can know themselves, by the distinguishing marks of grace that the Spirit of Christ produces in them (see WCF chapter 18).

Verses 2 through 5 give the principle marks. In verse 2, the one who will be in heaven walks perfectly and works righteousness, (see Genesis 17:1). Even while he is engaged in obeying God, his heart is speaking truth. The internal dialogue of his heart is sincere. He isn't saying: “I don't want to do this stuff, I would do otherwise, but I have to do this if I want to get to heaven.” No, that is hypocrisy. That sort of internal dialogue reveals that the person is living a lie - and he knows it, in his own conscience. The person who will be in heaven is sincere - he walks perfectly because he wants to do so, and he wants to because he loves and is grateful to God. That is his reality - that is what his heart speaks - before God and his own conscience (see John 15:9-10, 1 John 5:3-4). Without this mark, there can be no other.

In verse 3, the mark of actively loving our neighbour is described. The person who will be in heaven will not do evil to his neighbour on the way. He understands that God is vitally interested in personal relationships and our attitudes to them and our conduct in them - for it is the personal, covenant God of most impeccable truth and holiness with whom we hope to dwell. The heaven-ward man will live according to this knowledge, and will therefore not backbite with his tongue, sowing poison into other people's minds and destroying truth and trust; nor will he take up a reproach that someone else has started and pass it on to others either. He will handle even the truth very wisely and circumspectly, seeking the good of his neighbour (1 Peter 4:8, Proverbs 10:12). Such a tamer of the tongue is a perfect man, and able to bridle the whole body (James 3:2, Luke 6:45).

In verse 4, the one who will be in heaven is revealed by his friendships. Like poles on a magnet, the citizen of the kingdom of heaven is spiritually attracted to other fearers of Jehovah because he feels a spiritual affinity with them and their ways; but he is powerfully repelled from vile people and the sinful lifestyle they produce and enjoy. Certainly he will be a friend “to” them, seeking their good; but he is not friendly with their sins, nor with them as they cling to those sins. This spiritual affinity and repulsion is a mark of the person who is headed for heaven. If in this life our inclination is toward the company of the ungodly, rather than friendship with the holy God, his Christ, his saints who are members together with us of the body of Christ, and his holy angels, then we could never be happy in heaven! Heaven would be “hell” to us. “In this the children of God are manifest, and the children of the devil: whosoever does not righteousness is not of God, neither he that loves not his brother” (1 John 3:10). By this measure the person who will be in heaven asks God to search, know and try his heart, (Psalm 139:19-24).

And the person who will be in heaven is a keeper of his word. Once he swears, even if it involves personal loss and hurt to keep that promise, then he will not change - no, not even if it means his own life. Such obedience to God is unqualified. It is absolute. For the man who will be in heaven, sufficient reason to warrant unfaithfulness to God or man simply cannot exist in God's creation.

In verse 5, the one who will be in heaven is revealed by his attitude toward “money” - he is not governed by covetousness and idolatry. This is evident in that he will not put his money to usury^[1], nor will he take a bribe. To the one who is walking perfectly and doing righteousness, it is inconceivable to abandon a good conscience for a few pieces of silver. He is governed, internally, by a heart that has its treasure and life laid up in heaven, and is seeking first the kingdom of God and its righteousness; trusting God to add anything that is good for him and necessary to do what God calls him to

do in this life, (see Colossians 3:1-7).

David is not saying that their own character and works will make them worthy of heaven - no, he is very clear in Psalm 130: "If thou, LORD, shouldst mark iniquities, O LORD, who shall stand?" Every saved sinner in God's heaven shall say: "Worthy is the Lamb that was slain ...we have believed in Jesus Christ, that we might be justified by the faith of Christ, and not by the works of the law: for by the works of the law shall no flesh be justified" (Revelation 5:12, Galatians 2:16). To read this Psalm as a list of "things to do" in order to earn our way into heaven, is to be condemned by its impossibly high demands - utterly.

Rather, this Psalm teaches us very clearly that there is only one person who can, in their own right enter heaven - that one is Jesus Christ. He is the only sinlessly holy, upright walking, righteousness working, truth speaking, neighbour loving, antithetical lover of the God fearing, sticker to his promise even at the cost of his own life One. His perfection of obedience merits access into eternal life with the HOLY God for himself and all that the Father gave Him. The rest of us are but sinners who must be carried into heaven on his mighty shoulders. We sinning saints may sing this Psalm and see ourselves described in it, but only as we understand that Jesus is bearing us up. We must sing as those whom God has united to Jesus - our Head and Surety - the Saviour who in his own human nature has perfected human holiness and obedience for us. He has provided, in himself, every particle of new obedience that we can ever need or possess both in this life and in that which is to come. That is what we mean when we pray: "Please give me grace!" Yes, we are asking God to comfort us with the assurance that He still loves us for Christ's sake, even though we are so undeserving; but we are also asking for Christ to give us more of that perfect human holiness and obedience that he holds in store for us. It is going to be ours in heaven - fully. But we are asking for a greater measure of it now - while we are struggling against our remaining corruptions. Lord, make me more like you are - conform me more and more to your image - to the image of your sinless humanity which is the perfection of God's image in man! Lord, give me of your grace. Jesus holds that in store for us. He unites us to himself by his Spirit, through faith, in order to share it with us. And he gives grace out into that outstretched empty hand of faith all the way to heaven; until at last "we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is" (1 John 3:1-3).

Dear reader, this Psalm shows us that if we are to entertain a good hope of heaven we must be united to Christ by faith for communion in his transforming grace - in this present life of ours. It shows us that the way to heaven is from grace to glory, or not at all (see Romans 5:1-5). That vital communion with Christ in grace that the Holy Spirit gives us in regeneration changes us (2 Corinthians 5:17). If that is true for us, there will now be things about us that show that we belong with Christ in heaven. That spiritual reality underlies all our doing - we are united to Christ by a living faith that communes with Jesus. We now live by consciously (thoughtfully) depending upon him, looking to him for that life and help and guidance and strength we need in order to do any good thing, seeking all from him in prayer and trust, receiving from him of every particle of human holiness that ever comes to expression in our lives.

From that living faith unfolds a sincere (imperfect and small, yes) but utterly sincere beginning of new obedience that marks out the person who will one day be in heaven!

"He that doeth these things shall never be moved" (v:5b).

Psalm 15 (King James Version)

1Lord, who shall abide in thy tabernacle? who shall dwell in thy holy hill?

2He that walketh uprightly, and worketh righteousness, and speaketh the truth in his heart.

3He that backbiteth not with his tongue, nor doeth evil to his neighbour, nor taketh up a reproach against his neighbour.

4In whose eyes a vile person is contemned; but he honoureth them that fear the LORD. He that sweareth to his own hurt, and changeth not.

5He that putteth not out his money to usury, nor taketh reward against the innocent. He that doeth these things shall never be moved.

Genesis 17:1

1And when Abram was ninety years old and nine, the LORD appeared to Abram, and said unto him, I am the Almighty God; walk before me, and be thou perfect.

John 15:9-10

9As the Father hath loved me, so have I loved you: continue ye in my love.

10If ye keep my commandments, ye shall abide in my love; even as I have kept my Father's commandments, and abide in his love.

1 John 5:3-4

3For this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments: and his commandments are not grievous.

4For whatsoever is born of God overcometh the world: and this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith.

1 Peter 4:8

8And above all things have fervent charity among yourselves: for charity shall cover the multitude of sins.

Proverbs 10:12

12Hatred stirreth up strifes: but love covereth all sins.

James 3:2

2For in many things we offend all. If any man offend not in word, the same is a perfect man, and able also to bridle the whole body.

Luke 6:45

45A good man out of the good treasure of his heart bringeth forth that which is good; and an evil man out of the evil treasure of his heart bringeth forth that which is evil: for of the abundance of the heart his mouth speaketh.

1 John 3:10

10In this the children of God are manifest, and the children of the devil: whosoever doeth not righteousness is not of God, neither he that loveth not his brother.

Psalms 139:19-24

19Surely thou wilt slay the wicked, O God: depart from me therefore, ye bloody men.

20For they speak against thee wickedly, and thine enemies take thy name in vain.

21Do not I hate them, O LORD, that hate thee? and am not I grieved with those that rise up against thee?

22I hate them with perfect hatred: I count them mine enemies.

23Search me, O God, and know my heart: try me, and know my thoughts:

24And see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting.

Colossians 3:1-7

1If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God.

2Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth.

3For ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God.

4When Christ, who is our life, shall appear, then shall ye also appear with him in glory.

5Mortify therefore your members which are upon the earth; fornication, uncleanness, inordinate affection, evil concupiscence, and covetousness, which is idolatry:

6For which things' sake the wrath of God cometh on the children of disobedience:

7In the which ye also walked some time, when ye lived in them.

Revelation 5:12

12Saying with a loud voice, Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honour, and glory, and blessing.

Galatians 2:16

16Knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the law, but by the faith of Jesus Christ, even we have believed in Jesus Christ, that we might be justified by the faith of Christ, and not by the works of the law: for by the works of the law shall no flesh be justified.

[1] God forbid his Old Testament saints to exact usury (interest payments) from fellow believers, Deuteronomy 23:19-20. In this Judicial law God taught the very same principles of godliness and heavenly-mindedness to the church in its

infancy, as are set forth in all their fullness to New Testament saints by our Lord Jesus in Matthew 6:19-34 and 16:24-27, and by the apostle Paul in 1 Timothy 6: 5-19 and 2 Corinthians 8: 8-9.

1 John 3:1-3

1Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God: therefore the world knoweth us not, because it knew him not.

2Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is.

3And every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself, even as he is pure.

Romans 5:1-5

1Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ:

2By whom also we have access by faith into this grace wherein we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God.

3And not only so, but we glory in tribulations also: knowing that tribulation worketh patience;

4And patience, experience; and experience, hope:

5And hope maketh not ashamed; because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost which is given unto us.

2 Corinthians 5:17

17Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new.