

Series: Psalm
Title: He Who Keeps His Oath
Text: Psalm 15: 4
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Who will holy God accept? Who will holy God receive to dwell with him in his holy hill of heavenly Zion for all eternity? David asked that question in Psalm 15: 1.

Psalm 15: 1: LORD, who shall abide in thy tabernacle? who shall dwell in thy holy hill?

Is anyone under the sound of my voice interested in the answer to that question? We all should be because each of us shall stand before the judgment seat of holy God very soon. We all have an eternity to spend somewhere: either in the joy of heaven or in the terrors of hell under the wrath and judgment of God, so it behooves us to listen carefully and heed God's word.

God himself, gives the answer. Will you listen to what God says he requires of us? This is God declaring who it is that he will accept to dwell with him for all eternity.

Psalm 15: 2: He that walketh uprightly, and worketh righteousness, and speaketh the truth in his heart. 3: He that backbiteth not with his tongue, nor doeth evil to his neighbour, nor taketh up a reproach against his neighbour. 4: In 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. 5: He that putteth not out his money to usury, nor taketh reward against the innocent. He that doeth these things shall never be moved.

If we summarized the answer God gives here, the answer would be this: the man God will receive into his holy presence is he, that "loves the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy strength, and with all thy mind; and thy neighbour as thyself." (Lu 10:25-27) What we have before us in this Psalm is the law of God. And God is saying here that the man God will receive must be as holy and righteous as God is holy and righteous.

Adam, the first representative man disobeyed God. By his one transgression he broke all of these things listed in this Psalm—both toward God, as well as toward his neighbor because all men would be born of him. Adam broke the whole law of God. And because his death passed upon us, being born of his corrupt seed, "for that all have sinned." (Rom 5: 12) No child of Adam has done any of these things ever—no, not one.

Romans 3:23: For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God;

Galatians 3:11: But that no man is justified by the law in the sight of God, it is evident: for, The just shall live by faith.

But doesn't God say in this Psalm that for God to receive us WE must do these things? Indeed, he does! Every man God will receive must do these things and must do them perfectly, without sin! Who then can be saved?

The only one that has done all these things perfectly is the last Adam, the only other representative man, God's own Son the Lord Jesus Christ. Christ represented his people—those chosen of God—when he did these things so that we actually did them perfectly in Christ our Representative. Not only that, but Christ went to the cross, took all the sins of his people, wherein we sinned in all these things, satisfied justice for us and put away all our sin. It was at the cross that Christ preeminently did all of these things. When Christ willing laid down his life to be made sin and bear the justice of God in place of his people it was then that Christ walked uprightly, worked righteousness and spoke the truth; it was then that Christ did good to his neighbor; it was then that Christ conemned the vile man and honored them that fear the LORD; it was then that Christ kept his oath; it was then that

Christ provided the poor with unsearchable riches; it was then that Christ upheld justice. So those called by God the Holy Spirit to rest in Christ have done these things perfectly through faith in Christ.

Now, indeed, those born of the Spirit of God, have a new heart in which we delight in these things and we would like to do them perfectly. Yet, our hope is not that we have done these things for we have been made honest that we cannot do them as God requires them to be done. But our hope is that Christ has and that Christ has put away our sin so that we are complete and accepted of God in him through faith.

Proposition: The purpose of God in giving us these things—as with all the law—is to show us our sin while showing us the greatness of our Savior who did all of these in perfection.

So tonight, our focus will be the last two things God gives here. And again, we will see how we failed to do them but how Christ has fulfilled these things perfectly and is the fulfillment of these things for all who trust him.

I. THE MAN GOD WILL RECEIVE IS HE THAT WILL KEEP HIS WORD, EVEN WHEN IT MEANS HIS OWN HURT—V4: *He that sweareth to his own hurt, and changeth not.*

“Swearing” is to take a solemn oath or vow before God to do such and such a thing.

For example: in a court of law, a witness raises his hand to God, saying, “I swear to tell the truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth so help me God.” That is an oath.

Our text says the man who shall dwell with God in his holy hill is **“He that sweareth to his own hurt, and changeth not.”** That is, though his oath will mean his own hurt, yet he does not go back on his word but does the thing he vowed to do.

Such a one is perfectly faithful to his word, exactly fulfilling all the obligations he promises he will do, even when it means harm or loss to himself. He is one who can be counted on because he is honest, upright, faithful and just in all his dealings. That one is “Jesus Christ the same yesterday, and to day, and for ever.” (Heb 13: 8)

Sinners Cannot and Will Not Keep our Oath

When Moses delivered the commandments of God to the children of Israel at Mt. Sinai, the LORD entered into a covenant of works with them, like he did with Adam in the garden. In the covenant of works God said that IF the children of Israel kept all his commandments perfectly THEN God would bless them. That is what a covenant of works requires.

Now, be sure you understand, when God made that covenant with them, they were already sinners. There would be no way they would keep the law of God. So why did God give it?

God gave the law to reveal sin to those God would save from among them—his true elect remnant among them. By the law, God shows his people that we must be saved through the everlasting covenant of grace (God doing all the works) rather than through a covenant of works (which makes salvation dependent upon us keeping all the works of the law perfectly.)

Romans 3: 19: Now we know that what things soever the law saith, it saith to them who are under the law: that every mouth may be stopped, and all the world may become guilty before God. 20: Therefore by the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified in his sight: for by the law *is* the knowledge of sin.

Notice this, when God gave his commandments they asked for a mediator to go between them and God. They said,

Deuteronomy 5: 26: For who is there of all flesh, that hath heard the voice of the living God speaking out of the midst of the fire, as we have, and lived? 27: Go thou near, and hear all that the LORD our God shall say: and speak thou unto us all that the LORD our God shall speak unto thee;

But notice, they only wanted a mediator to tell them what God said THEY must do. But they said this.

Deuteronomy 5: 27:... and we will hear it, and do it.

Application: Now, that is what most religious people want Christ for: to tell us what we must do, to be an example to us, but then men vainly imagine we can do the works necessary to save ourselves. Not true!

So when the children of Israel said that they would hear and do the commandments they made an oath and entered into a covenant with God. They swore, they vowed, they made an oath, that they would do what God commanded.

Concerning their need of a mediator, the LORD said they spoke well.

Deuteronomy 5:28: And the LORD heard the voice of your words, when ye spake unto me; and the LORD said unto me, I have heard the voice of the words of this people, which they have spoken unto thee: they have well said all that they have spoken.

But concerning their oath, their promising that they themselves would keep all his commandments, God said,

Deuteronomy 5: 29: O that there were such an heart in them, that they would fear me, and keep all my commandments always, that it might be well with them, and with their children for ever!

Our text says, God will receive the man who “**swaereth to his own hurt, and changeth not.**” Brethren, you and I—no sinner—can of his flesh, of his will, of his power, keep an oath to God or to men. We are shown that by God through these natural, unregenerate children of Israel.

When the children of Israel entered the land God gave, God said, “Ye shall not go after other gods, of the gods of the people which are round about you;” (Deut 6: 14) But when they would suffer to their own hurt in their business or in wartime unless they compromised with the false worship of the people around them, they changed—they went back on their oath and broke the law of God—to avoid their own hurt.

The Lord said they were to enter into no covenants with the people of that land (Deuteronomy 7: 2) But when it came to suffering hurt in personal gain and loss of personal gain, they broke the law of God, entering into covenants with the people, so as not to suffer their own hurt—they changed and went back on their oath.

God said in the law we are not to marry with unbelievers because God said the false worshippers will turn us, our sons and daughters to worship idol gods. (Deuteronomy 7: 3-6). Yet, rather than suffer their own hurt, to please their lusts, they broke their oath to God and married them anyway.

Application: These are just a few examples. But the point is that you and I, along with every sinner born of Adam, if left to ourselves will do the same. By nature, no man has ability of himself to keep any oath to God or men for when it comes to our suffering in the flesh to our own hurt we will break our oath to please our flesh. And the heart of flesh is so deceitful that we will even do so believing in our vain hearts that we are KEEPING our oath and honoring his law.

Jeremiah 17:9: The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked: who can know it?

II. CHRIST JESUS IS THE ONLY ONE WHO HAS KEPT HIS OATH, EVEN WHEN IT MEANT HIS OWN HURT—V4: *He that swaereth to his own hurt, and changeth not.*

God the Son, Christ Jesus, entered into a covenant with God the Father to be Surety of his people before the world began.

Christ Promised to Take Flesh

Christ promised to come to this earth to be born in the likeness of sinful flesh because those he came to redeem were flesh. It meant his own hurt because Christ would be, and was, despised and rejected of men. (Isaiah 53: 3) It meant his own hurt of living amongst sinners who were nothing like our glorious Savior. Yet, when the fullness of time was come, he kept his oath.

Christ Promised to be the Spotless Lamb of God

It meant his own hurt because no man had ever served God in perfection like Christ and so men hated him all the more because of it. (John 15: 22-24; Proverbs 29: 27) Christ would be hurt from bearing the backbiting, the evil works and the reproaches of men. (Psalm 69: 9; 31: 11; 109: 25; Yet, he kept his oath.

Christ Promised to Bear the Sin of God's Elect

Christ made an oath that in his own body he would bear all the sin of all the elect of God in order that the law might be honored and magnified and God's holy justice be upheld. (1 Peter 2: 24; Isaiah 53: 6; Hebrews 9: 28)

It meant his own hurt from being made what he was not—he knew no sin. (2 Corinthians 5: 21; Hebrews 7: 26) He despised sin. Sin is an abomination to our holy and spotless Redeemer. He despised the shame of being made sin for his people. (Hebrews 12: 2)

Not only that, it meant the hurt of bearing the bruises and wounds in body, soul and spirit from bearing our sin in his own body—it was because of sin that “his visage was so marred more than any man, and his form more than the sons of men:” (Isaiah 52: 14; Isaiah 53: 5)

Most of all, it meant the unimaginable hurt of being forsaken of the God he loved. (Psalm 22: 1-3; Matthew 27: 46; Mark 15: 34) God is holy and just. (Isaiah 6: 3; Revelation 4: 8; Deuteronomy 32: 4; Romans 3: 26) Therefore, when Christ was made sin, God would by no means clear the guilty. (Exodus 34: 7) God must punish sin, even when it is found on his own darling Son. So God forsook him on the cross as would have us, had Christ not took our place and bore it in our room and stead.

Yet, though all of this meant his own hurt, Christ kept his oath. So we see brethren that Christ Jesus the Lord is the only one who has perfectly sworn to his own hurt, and changed not. By his faithfulness in keeping his Suretyship engagements all those for whom he was hurt are now healed, reconciled to God and redeemed from all iniquity. (Isaiah 53: 5; Hebrews 9: 12; Romans 5: 10; 2 Corinthians 5: 20)

Application: It is sad that sinners are being told that they can do these things, that all is on their shoulders—that they, themselves, must do these things or they cannot be saved. They are constantly in bondage and have no comfort and no rest in Christ.

Illustration: The past five days I spent with my grandmother Curtis I have seen the utter worthlessness, utter powerlessness, and utter inability of our flesh. She could barely take a breath; she could not raise herself out of bed; she could not control her thoughts to speak coherently; her heart would jump to 150 beats per minute then drop to 25 beats per minute. All of these things were entirely out of her control.

As I sat holding her hand, I thought how desperately wicked our own depraved hearts are to deceive us into putting confidence in our flesh: in our will, in our strength, or in our ability. If there was anything that you told my grandmother she must do, or could do, by her fleshly strength to save herself from physical death, in her condition

in that bed, it would have been utterly impossible for her to do it. The same inability in her to do anything physically to save herself is the same inability in all men to do anything spiritually to save ourselves.

For you and I—and for every other sinner—the things required in this 15th Psalm—in all the law of God—are as utterly impossible for us to do spiritually in perfection to save ourselves as it was for that 90 year old woman to do anything physically in her flesh to save herself from physical death.

Isaiah 40: 6:…All flesh is grass, and all the goodliness thereof is as the flower of the field: 7: The grass withereth, the flower fadeth: because the spirit of the LORD bloweth upon it: surely the people is grass.

But will you hear God speak!

Isaiah 40: 8: The grass withereth, the flower fadeth: but the word of our God shall stand for ever.

Christ is the Word who fulfilled the word of our God, his own word. When God gives us a new heart, makes us see our sin and behold Christ Jesus, the end of the law for righteousness, God makes with us an everlasting covenant ordered in all things and sure and, Christ who was faithful to keep his oath even to his own hurt, becomes all our hope and all our salvation. And all those in him shall endure forever, made the righteousness of God in him.

I trust my grandmother's hope was Christ alone as she said it was. If so, at 3:30 this afternoon she entered into that eternal uninterrupted communion with him just as like our covenant-keeping God promises we shall! Christ is the real promise keeper!

III. BRETHREN, MAKE NO OATHS BUT LET YOUR YES BE YES AND YOUR NO BE NO.

Now, brethren, concerning you and I making oaths, Christ teaches his child not to swear at all but simply be true to your word.

Matthew 5: 33: Again, ye have heard that it hath been said by them of old time, Thou shalt not forswear thyself, [commit perjury] but shalt perform unto the Lord thine oaths: 34: But I say unto you, SWEAR NOT AT ALL;

This does not include times when we may have to be sworn in by a court of law. In such cases we are to do what is lawful. But he means in matters between us and God or between us and other men.

Matthew 5: 34: But I say unto you, SWEAR NOT AT ALL; Neither by heaven; for it is God's throne: 35: Nor by the earth; for it is his footstool: neither by Jerusalem; for it is the city of the great King.

Illustration: "I swear by Art's house such and such."

I have no right to do so because Art's house does not even belong to me. Likewise, we can swear by nothing in heaven or earth because all belongs to God, not us. So do not swear by heaven or earth.

Matthew 5: 36: Neither shalt thou swear by thy head, because thou canst not make one hair white or black.

Neither swear on your life—which is what is meant "by thy head." The believers life is of Christ and we have no power to uphold our life, to make one hair white or black. So do not swear on your life.

Matthew 5: 37: But let your communication be, Yea, yea; Nay, nay: for whatsoever is more than these cometh of evil.

If we say yes or no then do that which you have said you would do. And it should always be "if the Lord is willing" because it is only by his will and power that we can do anything. Whatsoever is more than a simply yes

or no comes of evil. If it takes an oath to make a man accountable to keep his word then it proves him a liar and unfaithful and evil. This is how Satan would have the world to operate. And by in large, that is exactly how the world operates. You have to constantly sign contracts, entering into oaths that you will do such and such. It is all evil. Believers ought to simply say, "Yes or no, if it is the Lord's will, I will do such and such." Our word should be as good as an oath, even when it means our own hurt.

Our Surety, who swore to his own hurt, but gloriously fulfilled his suretyship engagements even unto death, is our constraint and example to fulfill our covenants with others, even to our own hurt. That is what Paul said to the Corinthians.

2 Corinthians 1: 17 When I therefore was thus minded, did I use lightness? or the things that I purpose, do I purpose according to the flesh, that with me there should be yea yea, and nay nay? 18 But as God is true, our word toward you was not yea and nay.

Paul said, I did not use lightness when I purposed to come to you. I did not purpose after the flesh as if I had power in my flesh. I did not say, "Yes, of certainty I will come to you." But I said "yes, if the Lord will, I will come to you." And he said, "And I meant what I said" And here was Paul's constraint to be true to his word. It was Christ our covenant keeping God for our gospel is not yes and no or maybe, but sure because Christ accomplished all he promised.

2 Corinthians 1: 19 For [because] the Son of God, Jesus Christ, who was preached among you by us, even by me and Silvanus and Timotheus, was not yea and nay, but in him was yea. 20 For all the promises of God in him are yea, and in him Amen, unto the glory of God by us.

Remember: whatever we may lose, if the honor of remaining true to our word is not lost, all other losses are bearable; but if we lose the honor of being true to our word then we have lost all.

So brethren, here are the three things we have seen tonight.

- 1) Rest in Christ who kept all his Suretyship engagements for his people and turn not to your own law-keeping for acceptance with God. Ye are complete in him!
- 2) Sware not all. But let your yes be yes, if the Lord will. And you no be no, if the Lord will.
- 3) Remember, our constraint is Christ, because all the promises of God in him are yea, and in him Amen, unto the glory of God by us.

Amen!