

Sermon
Summer Psalms 2024
Integrity and Truthfulness
Lesson 3 Psalm 15 Pt 2
081124

¹ LORD, who may dwell in your sacred tent? Who may live on your holy mountain? ² The one whose walk is blameless, who does what is righteous, who speaks the truth from their heart; ³ whose tongue utters no slander, who does no wrong to a neighbor, and casts no slur on others; ⁴ who despises a vile person but honors those who fear the LORD; who keeps an oath even when it hurts, and does not change their mind; ⁵ who lends money to the poor without interest; who does not accept a bribe against the innocent. Whoever does these things will never be shaken (Psalm 15:1–5).

Introduction

- 1 Two weeks ago we restarted our biannual study in the Psalms, a series that we call “Summer Psalms.” In week one we studied Psalm 18 which talks about God being our Rock. Last week we started taking a look Psalm 15 which poses the question how can a person have close fellowship with God?
- 2 That’s what David means when he says Lord who may dwell in your tent ... who may live on your holy mountain. The answer to that question is given in the rest of the psalm which describes a person who has godly character.
 - a And by godly character I don’t mean perfect character but rather a person who is concerned about doing God’s will and obeying God’s commands. Another way of saying it is a person who is endeavoring to more and more be like their Savior, Jesus Christ.
 - b We spent a great deal of time talking about this last week and if you weren’t here I encourage you to watch, read or listen to last week’s message in order to fully benefit from today’s message.
 - c The best place to do that is through the Church Center app where we offer the video, sermon notes and **devotional** for each message. You can also find those on our webpage gracepsl.org. The audio is also available on Spotify/iTunes at all lower case “gracepsl.”

- 3 Again, the question posed here is not about how to be made right with God but rather how to have fellowship with God. In other words the question is not about justification, rather it is about pursuing sanctification. Some clarification here might be helpful.

Justification vs Sanctification

- 1 **Justification is the act of God declaring you righteous before him.**
 - a Jesus Christ lived a life of perfect obedience to God's law. When we believe in him the merits of his perfectly lived life are given to us as a gift. His righteousness is credited or imputed to us.
 - b On the basis of that imputed righteousness God declares us "justified" ... a **status** which in turn gives us total access to God (Rom 5:2).
Since we have been justified through faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ ²through whom we have gained access by faith into this grace in which we now stand. (Rom 5:1-2a).
- 2 The word sanctification means to be "set apart" and it's used of both a **status** given to us by God and a **process** we pursue. When you believe in Christ God sets you apart from the world and for himself and then calls you, on the basis of that new status, to live a set apart or righteous life.
 - a Therefore, **Sanctification is the process of you becoming more and more righteous and less and less like the world in your thoughts, attitudes and actions.**
 - b In Ephesians 4 it is called putting off the old man and putting on the new man (Eph 4:22-24). We often speak of this as the process of becoming more and more like Jesus. That is God's final goal for us.
For those God foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son (Rom 8:29a).
Do not conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind (Rom 12:2a)
 - c And this process of being conformed to the image of Christ and being transformed (aka sanctification) is accomplished through God's Word and in partnership with God the Holy Spirit.
 - The means of sanctification is God's Word. Jesus prayed, sanctify them in the truth your word is truth (Jn 17:17).
 - The method of sanctification is a partnership with the Holy Spirit who works in us. Philippians 2 says,

... continue to **work out** your salvation with fear and trembling,
¹³ for it is God who **works in** you to will and to act in order to fulfill
his good purpose (Phil 2:12b-13).

- i Work out your salvation doesn't mean work for your salvation. It means to live out your salvation, to live out your new nature in Christ because God is at work in you for that very purpose.
- ii Fear and trembling is not fear of judgment or fear of losing your salvation but the wholesome dread of displeasing a God who at an infinite cost to himself saved you and justified you.
- d Therefore, the motivation for pursuing sanctification is your justification.
 - Instead of rightly judging you for your sin God mercifully and graciously saved you, justified you and set you apart to himself.
 - Now live that out with fear and trembling. Live that out with intentionality. Romans 12 says it is your reasonable worship. Don't take it lightly.
- 3 And here is where the 21st century church has fallen short. It is not often enough that we hear another believer speak of fear or trembling when it comes to sanctification, obedience and transformation.
 - a Part of the reason is that people confuse sanctification with justification.
 - On the one hand you have Christians who believe that justification is achieved by sanctification. Therefore, they are trying to earn their way into heaven through their obedience to God's commands.
 - On the other hand you have Christians who believe justification replaces sanctification. Therefore, they are nonchalant about their obedience to God's commands.
 - b So there's two ditches to avoid.
 - If a person emphasizes sanctification over justification they will inevitably grow tired on the hamster wheel of trying to be good enough instead of resting in God's grace.
 - On the other hand if a person emphasizes justification over sanctification they will end up with a sloppy faith and excusing their sin in the name of God's grace.
 - c Now, I am not implying that people are ungrateful for their salvation but rather they do not understand God's priority of sanctification.

- 4 Why is that? There are many reasons for that. The one I want to highlight this morning is that many modern Christians think that sanctification is something that automatically happens or happens without much effort.
- a They believe that if you are living the Christian life the right way there should be no striving.
 - That's true when it comes to justification. You're not saved and made right with God by striving but rather by resting ... resting in God's grace alone, through faith alone, in Christ alone.
 - But when it comes to sanctification there is striving involved.
 - b The Bible speaks sanctification as something that requires great effort. In his second letter Peter lays the whole thing when he says ...

⁵ For this very reason, **make every effort** to add to your faith goodness; and to goodness, knowledge; ⁶ and to knowledge, self-control; and to self-control, perseverance; and to perseverance, godliness; ⁷ and to godliness, mutual affection; and to mutual affection, love. ⁸ For if you possess these qualities in increasing measure, they will keep you from being ineffective and unproductive in your knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. ⁹ But whoever does not have them is nearsighted and blind, forgetting that they have been cleansed from their past sins.

¹⁰ Therefore, my brothers and sisters, **make every effort** to confirm your calling and election. For if you do these things, you will never stumble, ¹¹ and you will receive a rich welcome into the eternal kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. 2 Peter 1:5–11 (NIV)
 - c The writer of Hebrews summarizes it by saying, **Make every effort to live in peace with everyone and to be holy**; without holiness no one will see the Lord (Heb 12:14).
 - The word holy is from the same word translated sanctification.
 - So we could translate this, “Make every effort to pursue sanctification for without sanctification no one will see (have close fellowship) with the Lord.”
- 5 Now this is exactly what the Holy Spirit says through David in Psalm 15. He asks who can have close fellowship with the Lord and then answers with a sampling of the kind of character you see developing in a person who is justified *and* pursuing sanctification. Justification gives you access to God (Rom 5:2) but sanctification gives you closeness with God.
- a In Psalm 15 there are six character traits presented using a Hebrew form of poetry known as a parallelism. English poetry uses rhyme and

meter. Hebrew poetry uses parallelism and Psalm 15 is the first example of this in the Psalms.

- b Basically parallelism is two parallel statements that say the same thing in two different ways.
 - Sometimes it involves thematic **repetition** as in the first part of verse 2 ... *He whose walk is blameless and who does what is righteous (v2a)*. Think of that as two sides of the same coin.
 - Sometimes the parallelism expresses a **contrast**, as in the last part of verse 2 and beginning of verse 3. *Who speaks the truth from his heart [doesn't lie] and has no slander on his tongue [doesn't lie about others] (v2b-3a)*.
 - Sometimes the parallelism expresses **emphasis** as in the second half of verse 4. *Who keeps his oath ... even when it hurts (v4b)*.
- 6 So when you look at these verses this way there are six qualities emphasized;
 - a The first, we will discover, is integrity followed by five more qualities that specifically reveal how integrity is shown in the way we relate to other people in terms of our speech, conduct, values, promises and use of money. We will take up the first two with the rest of our time this morning and then finish up with the rest next week.
 - b It bears repeating that the presence of these qualities in your life will not make you more loved by God but will enable you to more fully love God and experience the love of God.
 - c Everyone has access through Christ. But there is a closeness that comes only to those who seek first the King and his kingdom. Hebrews 11 says ... he rewards those who earnestly seek him.

The six qualities of Psalm 15

LORD, who may dwell in your sacred tent? Who may live on your holy mountain? ² The one whose walk is blameless, who does what is righteous ... (Ps 15:1-2a).

The word “blameless” in the Bible does not mean sinless (Noah/Abraham). It is translated from the Hebrew word *tamim*, which means that which is “whole or undivided”. The matching English word for this is “integrity”

1 Integrity

- a Integrity is from the root word integer. You probably don't remember from your algebra class in High School but an integer is a number that is not a fraction. It is a whole number.
- b Integrity then is wholeness of character. It refers to a person whose character is not just godly in one area of their life and not in others, but one who whose character is godly in all areas. Allow me to explain.
 - Someone can have good character when it comes to sexual purity but not have good character when it comes to being kind. This is a person who won't watch a PG13 movie but nobody in the office likes working with them because they're a bit harsh and judgmental.
 - On the other hand someone could have good character when it comes to money but not when it comes to sexual purity. They tithe, help others in a bind, generous with tips but struggles with lust. That's a lack of integrity.
 - Someone could have good character when it comes using their time to serve God's people but not have good character when it comes holding private information about them in confidence.
 - Someone could have good character when it come to being gracious with people but not have good character when it comes to being on time. Gracious but always late.
- c Integrity is when you have equally good character in all the areas of life. Integrity is not so much about the maturity of your character as it is about the consistency of your character. If character is scaled 1-10, Jesus being a ten, you may be a five on your way to a six but if you have integrity you're a five across the board. There is uniformity.
- d **Illustration:** All large buildings today are made of steel frames. Steel is an alloy made by heating up iron and adding metals like Manganese, Chromium and Nickel. After cooling the steel it is tested for integrity by making sure the added metals were evenly distributed within the steel while in the furnace.
 - Potentially you could have two pieces of steel that both look great on the outside but one of them is weak and the other strong.
 - If the added metals were not evenly distributed within the iron the steel will lack integrity and eventual fail under pressure.
 - If the added metals were evenly distributed within the iron the steel will have integrity and hold up under pressure because it is the same

- throughout and therefore will not be shaken (v5b). That is what integrity is. It is being the same throughout.
- e And this integrity, according to the psalm, causes you to consistently do what is righteous before God no matter where you are, no matter what the situation. You are the same person on Monday that you are on Sunday morning. And that sameness, that integrity extends to your speech.

2 Truthful Speech

- a Lord, who may dwell in your sacred tent? Who may have close fellowship with you?... (the one) *who speaks the truth from their heart;*
³ *whose tongue utters no slander (v2c-3a)*
- Again this parallelism is a contrast. The first line tells what this person does, the second line what they don't do.
 - They are truthful in their speech and therefore they don't lie. And since they don't lie, they don't slander (lie about others). They are truthful in their speech.
- b Truth is a rare commodity in today's world.
- It's gotten to the point where it is very difficult to know what to believe anymore or who to believe. Even the so-called "fact checkers" are often not telling the truth. This will only get worse with AI and deepfakes and in the future will cause a great deal of chaos.
 - So it seems that the Judeo-Christian ethic of truth telling, which finds its origin in Scripture, is all but gone. Lying has just become a way of life for our culture. For some it's like breathing.
- c Perhaps that is why we have so many words in our language that describe a particular aspect of lying.
- There are your basic words like dishonesty, deception and deceit. But dishonesty comes in many sizes ... big lies, tall tales and whoppers and little lies like white lies, half-truths, fibs and exaggerations.
 - Then there are the lies that involve some level of creativity... fabrication, falsification or cover-up.
 - There are also politically correct words for lying ... a non-truth, a misstatement, misrepresentation, untruth or a half-truth,. Then there is the category that deals with lies about money ... forgery, scam, sham, counterfeit and fraud.

- And since there are so many words for lying we also have a lot of words for people who lie like dishonest, deceptive, deceitful, disingenuous and duplicitous. A little more down to earth ... two faced, phony, slick, shift, sneaky and crooked.
- d And there are many more of course. And they all reveal just how badly we need a revival of truth telling within our culture.
 - But culture is simply the reflection of the people who make up the culture.
 - The real problem is that in the heart of every person is the predisposition to lie. It comes nearly as natural as walking.
- e Now if you were to ask most Christians “are you a liar?” they would say no. And by that they mean I am generally a truthful person. But even truthful people have opportunities everyday to lie. Sometimes people do that by saying things like ...
 - “I don’t know” when in fact they really do know *or*
 - “I don’t remember” when in fact they really do remember *or*
 - “I’m on the way” when in fact they are not.
 - “I’ll try to make it” when in fact they have no intention of doing so.
 - “I’m late for the meeting because I got stuck in traffic.”
 - “I didn’t get your call because my phone died.”
 - Oh, this old thing? I’ve had it for ages.”
- f They are small when compared to other lies but lies nonetheless. It doesn’t matter how big the lie is, in every case it is still a lie and therefore dishonors God, gradually hardens our conscience and slowly erodes our integrity.
 - Remember integrity is wholeness which means we are not only to be truthful in big things but also small things. Unchecked, little lies make it easier to tell bigger lies.
 - There is simply no degrees when it comes to truth. Every time a person speaks the truth or lies, they align themselves either with God, “who never lies” (Titus 1:2), or with Satan, “the father of lies” (John 8:44).
 - God want us to be people who live by his truth ...to be people who believe the truth, who love the truth and who speak the truth.

People of Truth

You were taught, with regard to your former way of life, to put off your old self ... ²⁴ and to put on the new self, created to be like God in true righteousness and holiness. ²⁵ Therefore each of you must put off falsehood and speak truthfully to your neighbor, for we are all members of one body (Ephesians 4:22a,24-25).

- 1 We are called to be a people of truth because our God is a God of truth.
 - a God the Father is called the God of truth (Dt 32:4) who abounds in truth (Exodus 34:6) who chose to give us new birth through the word of truth (James 1:18).
 - b The same is true of Jesus Christ the Son of God who in the gospel of John said, I AM ... the truth (John 14:6) who “came from the Father, full of grace and truth” (John 1:14) and “everyone on the side of truth listens to me” (John 18:37).
 - c Likewise the Holy Spirit is called the Spirit of Truth (1 John 4:6) who guides us into all truth (John 16:13).
- 2 Since God is a God of truth then everything he has ever said is absolutely and entirely true.
 - a In Psalm 119 the Psalmist said, All his words are true. Jesus declared in prayer to the Father, your word is truth (John 17:17).
 - b And while the world is trading the truth of God for a lie (Romans 1:25) we are called to be people of truth. As bearers of God’s image we are called to reflect the attribute of truth in our own lives. ... to be true to God, and also truthful with one another.
- 3 And that starts in the heart. It is one thing to be a outwardly truthful person but it is quite another to be truthful in our hearts.
 - a Remember God’s commands are not only aimed at our behavior they are also aimed at our heart. That’s why verse two not only say to speak the truth but speak the truth from the heart. And why is that? Because that’s where God most desires us to be truthful ... *Surely you desire truth in the inner parts (Psalm 51:6).*
 - b So the question then is how do I grow in this concept of inward truthfulness? The answer is by believing the gospel more deeply.
- 4 The normal way we try to become more truthful or honest is by convincing ourselves that honesty pays. We’ve all heard the expression, “It pays to be honest” or “honesty is the best policy.”
 - a But what if the time comes where telling the truth will not pay but instead will cost you? It will cost you in the sense you will loose

something ... you will reputation, money, security, friends, acceptance, employment or opportunity.

- b Therefore, if the main reason for telling the truth is because it benefits you (honesty pays) or you fear losing something valuable (reputation, security, acceptance) ... you will struggle with telling the truth when it costs you.
- 5 So what we need is a motivation that is greater than the protection of our own security or our own self-image. And that motivation is the gospel.
- a God the Son, the Creator of the universe, humbled himself to enter the human race and was born into a poor Jewish family.
 - He grew in wisdom, stature favor with man and God and eventually entered into public ministry, three years of pure truth-telling.
 - At the end of his ministry everything culminates with being falsely accused and put on trial for his life.
 - b Many false witnesses were produced and bogus charges brought against him.
 - The Jews condemned him because he claimed to be God which He was and is.
 - The Romans condemned because he claimed to be King which he was and is. But that charge was the one that was used to condemn him.
 - c Eventually he is brought before Pilate who in a defining moment asks Jesus, “Are you a King?”
 - If Jesus says yes, he is dead for Pilate/Rome would allow no competing king.
 - However, if Jesus lies and says no or lies by making a misleading statement (I’m just a King in people’s hearts) he would have become a sinner and thus be disqualified from being our Savior.
 - If Jesus Christ lies at that one moment He saves himself but we are lost forever.
 - d Here is the ultimate witness in the ultimate courtroom and if he does not tell the truth ... at infinite cost to himself, we all perish.
“You are a king, then!” said Pilate. Jesus answered, “You are right in saying I am a king. In fact, for this reason I was born, and for this I came into the world, to testify to the truth. Everyone on the side of truth listens to me.” John 18:37

- e Jesus did tell the truth and at an infinite cost to himself. Not just the cost of physical death on the cross. But the cost of bearing the full brunt of the wrath of God for all the lies of every sinner who would one day be saved.
- 6 Therefore, our reason for being truthful and honest should not be because honesty pays us but rather because honesty cost Christ everything. It was an infinite cost to himself, out of infinite love for you that he died for your sins so that you would have all the power you need to live out the truth for Him and walk in integrity before Him.
- 7 And that's why we want to be truthful in our speech. That's why we pursue integrity. Our reason is Jesus alone.

Practical Application

- 1 Ephesians 4:22-25 says that we are to be intentional about pursuing integrity and truthfulness by putting off the old man and putting on the new man. One way we can do that this week is by reading, meditating on and obeying God's Word. His Word is truth.
- 2 Another way is by asking the Holy Spirit to reveal an area in our life where we need to put off the old man and put on the new man.
 - a It may be in the area of truthfulness and little lies or it may be in some other area.
 - b Whatever it is bring it before the Lord and repent of it so you can, as Peter says, *grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. To him be glory both now and forever. Amen (2 Peter 3:18).*

Closing Prayer

Lord Jesus, thank you for your example of integrity and truthfulness. Help us to grow in these areas, motivated by your love and sacrifice for us. Give us the courage to be truthful, even when it's difficult and strengthen us to pursue wholeness of character in all areas of our lives.

Small Group Discussion Questions

- 1 How does understanding the difference between justification and sanctification impact our daily walk with God and our pursuit of holiness?

- 2 The sermon mentions two "ditches" to avoid: emphasizing sanctification over justification, and emphasizing justification over sanctification. Which of these do you think is more common in today's church? Why?
- 3 Discuss the concept of integrity as "being the same throughout." Share an example of someone you know who demonstrates integrity. In what areas of your life do you find it challenging to maintain consistency?
- 4 The sermon states, "Every time a person speaks the truth or lies, they align themselves either with God or with Satan." How does this perspective impact your view on truthfulness?
- 5 Reflect on Jesus' example of telling the truth before Pilate, even at great personal cost. How does this inspire you to be more truthful?
- 6 In what ways does pursuing integrity and truthfulness impact our ability to have close fellowship with God, as described in Psalm 15?