

**Psalm 24: 1-10; “Ascending into the Lord’s Hill”, A sermon delivered at the  
Premier Estates Nursing Home on August 6<sup>th</sup>, 2017,  
by Pastor Paul Rendall.**

This Psalm, in its first two verses, begins with a mighty and majestic declaration of the earth and all its fullness belonging to the Lord. Both the world and everyone who dwells in it are under His immediate dominion and rule. He has founded the world upon the seas, it says. The Apostle Peter says in 2 Peter 3: 5, that He created the world, by His word; “the earth standing out of the water and in the water,” it says in that place. In the first creation God created the heavens and the earth, and the earth was “without form and void, and darkness was on the face of the deep”. And the Spirit of God was “hovering over the face of the waters”. And when God decided to separate and make a distinction between the heavens and the earth; when He formed the earth to become inhabitable for man, He “made the firmament, and divided the waters which were under the firmament from the waters which are above the firmament; and it was so.” Then He spoke and said that the waters under the heavens should be gathered together into one place, and that dry land should appear. And then it says, “And God called the dry land Earth, and the gathering together of the waters He called Seas.”

God is the One and the only one who can define the boundaries for such a great things as the earth and the seas. In Job 38: 4 God asks Job, “Where were you when I laid the foundations of the earth?” “Tell me if you have understanding.” “Who determined its measurements?” “Surely you know!” “Who shut in the sea with doors, when it burst forth and issued from the womb; when I made the clouds its garment, and thick darkness its swaddling band; when I fixed My limit for it, and set bars and doors; when I said, ‘This far you may come but no farther, and here your proud waves must stop!’” God defines these great things in creation, but He also defines them in the spiritual realm as well. He is the One who defines the boundaries in regard to who of the sons of men shall enter into His holy hill.

This relates directly, as we shall see, to the second creation which takes place in the heart of each person whom God saves from their sins and gives a new heart. And God does this through Jesus Christ our Lord as we shall find in verses 7-10. For heaven is a holy place, a holy hill it is called in verse 2. And there is only One who is worthy, truly worthy to ascend there, and He has. In fact this is where He is seated at this very hour, at the right hand of the Father. And so I am hoping that we can comprehend together, the answer to the question, “Who may ascend into the hill of the Lord, or who may stand in His holy place?” It is only those who meet these requirements which are given in verses 4-6. It will be good for us to review these requirements and see if we indeed meet up to them.

**The 1<sup>st</sup> requirement that God has for anyone to ascend up to heaven to be with Him forever is that they have clean hands and a pure heart.** (Verse 4)

I think that if a person was to read these verses for the first time that they would think that going to heaven is based upon our works. If my hands are just clean enough, and if my heart is just pure enough, then I shall be received into glory and dwell with God forever. And, indeed, we must admit that God’s standard is very strict and very high, in regard to who He will allow to dwell with Him, and who He will have fellowship with, forever. That person must have “clean hands and a pure heart.” Clean hands has reference to the things that we do in the sight of God and man. A pure heart has reference to all the thoughts and motives behind the things that we do. God did not create us in His own image and likeness to be anything less than what He gave to Adam before the Fall, in regard to perfection of moral character. He “created man upright”. God’s holy standard is perfect attitudes and behavior.

David says in Psalm 101, verse 2 – “I will behave myself wisely in a perfect way.” “Oh when will You come to me?” “I will walk within my house with a perfect heart.” Here the word perfect means to live in a blameless way before God; a sincerely blameless way. It means that your highest loyalty is to God. And in the context of verse 4 the words, “clean hands and a pure heart” are at least partially explained by the words that come after, “Who has not lifted up his soul to an idol, nor sworn deceitfully.” So the place where we begin, is to understand that our souls and what takes place there in the thoughts of the heart, are what is of greatest concern to God. We cannot have “lifted up our souls unto an idol”. In other words, we must be a worshipper of the true and living God who made the heavens and the earth, the sea and all that is in them.

And further, we must not have “sworn deceitfully”, it says at the end of verse 4. That is, that when we would be worshippers of God and say that we intend to keep His commandments and hold fast His truth, that we would do so in consistency. “This man,” verse 5 says, “shall receive blessing from the Lord, and righteousness from the God of his salvation.” Ah, now we are beginning to see the truth of the matter when we hear a phrase like this one: “the God of his salvation”. This is not speaking of a person, whether they are of Israel or not, attempting to merit favor with God by good behavior and works. The character being described is one whom God has saved. He is a person who has been saved by God, this psalm is saying, and that person will go on to become a man or woman of integrity because, “he has received blessing from the Lord.” In order for any person to see their need of salvation, they have to come to the place that they see that they have fallen short of God’s glory and His high standard. It was right for God to have expected perfect obedience and proven character, but since the Fall, every son of Adam and every daughter of Eve has had idols, entertained vanities, and sworn deceitfully in one way or another before they are saved. And even after they are saved, their obedience is not perfect in many ways. Sin is a distressing reality to all men whether they will admit it or not.

**But 2<sup>nd</sup> – If we are ever to become true worshippers of God and to ascend into his holy place, we have to become part of the generation that seeks God.** (Verse 6)

If we are a Christian we no doubt can remember a time when we sought the Lord because we had come to realize in a measure that we were sinners before Him, not righteous people. We probably did not understand how great a sinner we really were, and neither could we feel the guilt of our sin in terms of what it deserved, but at some point, we were wakened up to a real sense of our sinfulness. I hope that none of us will deny this. For if we think back carefully, we should realize that that there was nothing in ourselves that we could point to, or bring before God, that would convince Him that we were people who should be allowed to come into His holy presence; in order that we could behold His glory and worship Him forever, either in this life, or the next.

And so we came to the place where we sought Him. The “generation” that is spoken of here in the psalm is Jacob, the only nation upon the face of the earth that God had savingly revealed Himself to in Old Testament times. But we who seek the Lord in New Testament times are just as much the “generation of those who seek Him”. And each of us, if we are wise, we realize that we still need to seek God, day by day. We have found salvation by seeking Him, but we still are seeking Him in order that Christ’s grace may continue the good work that has been begun in us by faith. True faith is always seeking God and seeks Him through our Lord Jesus Christ. That is what prayer is all about. Seek the Lord and His strength, seek His face continually.” “Remember His marvelous works which He has done, His wonders, and the judgments of His mouth.” “Glory in His holy name; let the hearts of those rejoice who seek the Lord.”

**And then 3<sup>rd</sup> – The absolute and essential requirement that God expects of us if we are to enter His holy presence forever, is that we have Christ in us.**

(Verses 7-10)

In Colossians 1, verse 27 it says: "God willed to make known what are the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles; which is Christ in us, the hope of glory." This is the only way that we can ascend to God's holy hill, is if we have Christ in us. "Him we preach, warning every man and teaching every man in all wisdom that we may present every man perfect in Christ Jesus." We are not perfect in ourselves; we are seen by God as perfect in Christ Jesus. This is why we must learn by faith to lift up our heads. It is so that the King of Glory shall come in. It is not as though He is not here. It is not as though He is not in our hearts. But sometimes our faith is slow to perceive Him, even though I am preaching Him to you right now.

We who would have Christ dwell richly in our hearts are those who are personified in verse 9 of our text, as the everlasting doors mentioned there. The "everlasting doors" of our hearts must be lifted up each and every day, to behold His perfections and glory, and to remember what He has done for us. For what He has done deserves our best attention and highest regard at this point. If we will reflect upon what happened there at the cross when Jesus died for us, truly it will be of benefit to us in terms of our obedience to God. It will benefit us greatly in our hearts, in a spiritual sense, when we stop and think of the fact that the Lord Jesus Christ is the King of Glory. He was the Lord who was strong and mighty; mighty in battle, on your behalf and on my behalf. This is the One who alone was the man of integrity, the man who had clean hands and a pure heart. Here was the One and the only One who had not sworn deceitfully. What He vowed to do He did, and He fulfilled all of God's righteous and all of His holy law by a consistent and loving obedience unto His Father on our behalf. This is why we trust in Him. His is the complete and perfect righteousness we receive by faith when we first sought Him and it is the righteousness in which we stand. We stand complete in Him. And it is the righteousness which we are clothed with while we go about to obey God and keep His commandments.

Christ when He died was buried in the tomb after He suffered for our sakes, and on the third day He rose again. And after 40 days he ascended up on high. "When He ascended on high, He led captivity captive, and gave gifts to men." "Now this, 'He ascended' - what does it mean but that He also descended in the lower parts of the earth?" "To each one of us grace was given according to the measure of Christ's gift." All these verses of Paul's from Ephesians 4: 7-9 are filled with meaning. The everlasting doors of heaven were opened to Him as the One who conquered sin and death on our behalf, and thereby, grace came to us. Listen to Hebrews 9: 24 - "For Christ has not entered the holy places made with hands, which are copies of the true, but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us." And Hebrews 9: 11 - "But Christ came as High Priest of the good things to come, with the greater and more perfect tabernacle not made with hands, that is, not of this creation." "Not with the blood of goats and calves, but with His own blood He entered the Most Holy Place once for all, having obtained eternal redemption." This is the holy place to which you and I will ascend someday; the place where the everlasting doors were opened for the entrance of the Lord of Glory, after His victories on the cross.

But our hearts have everlasting doors as well. And when we receive the Lord Jesus Christ and when we would have more of Christ in our experience, this same exhortation to welcome Him is applicable. He is no longer a stranger to us that we might ask, "Who is this King of Glory?" We know the battle that He fought on our behalf at Calvary. And we now feed on His faithfulness; the One who ascended into the hill of the Lord; the One who stands in His Holy place on our behalf. He is our glorious Mediator and Intercessor, and we are with Him and we are in Him. And so, day by day He is teaching us what it means to have clean hands and pure heart. He is teaching us what it means to lift up our souls unto God in worship and He is teaching us the meaning of a sincere profession of faith. And it is all by, and because of His grace that we can ascend into God's holy hill, and when we die, be in the eternal place of blessedness, forever.