

O Lord our God and our Father,
You are light, and in You there is no darkness at all. He that comes to You must believe that You are and that You reward those who seek You. If we say that we know You and walk in the darkness, we lie and do not practice the truth. If we walk in the light, even as You're in the light, O Lord, The blood of Jesus Christ, your Son, cleanses us from each sin, and we have fellowship with you and with one another. So we pray this evening, our Father, that you will send forth the light of your Word. Help me to make it plain and clear as I ought to. Grant, O God, that You would search each of our hearts out and expose our sin, send Your Holy Spirit to convict us of sin, righteousness, and judgment to come, and draw us to Christ, the great Savior of sinners, O Lord. Some, perhaps, this evening for the first time, save them and draw them to Christ. Cause them to be born again to a living hope by His resurrection from the dead, according to Your abundant mercy. And work in us, O God, For your good pleasure, the rest of us who know you, work in us that we might work out our salvation with fear and trembling. For Jesus' sake we pray, amen. And amen. If you would turn with me in your copy of the Word of God to the book of Psalms in Psalm 15. I want you to imagine with me this evening the perfect house guest, the kind of person you would like to have come and stay in your house for a few days, perhaps not too long, but for a few days, the perfect guest. What kind of things would you be looking for in such a house guest? You'd want them to be fairly clean, you'd want them to be tidy and neat in the way they left the room, you'd want them to leave the room they stayed in the way they found it, and it would be nice, well, if they didn't smell. When I was in paediatrics in the Royal Belfast Hospital to pursue children, we had a large travelling community. I believe the word you might use for them is gypsies. And these people had a very distinct body odour. When they went into a room with their children, their odour would stay in that room for the rest of the day. And when you left, you'd want to burn your clothes and your stethoscope. and any other medical instruments you used there. But to them, it was totally normal, right? But they would not be the kind of people you'd want to have in your house. And the question that meets us this evening in our psalm is, what are the kind of people that God would like to have in his house, at his table for fellowship, at his temple for worship? That's the question. that stands before us this evening. Please listen carefully to the Word of God. 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 his eyes, a vile person is despised, but he honors those who fear the Lord, swears to his own hurt, and does not change. He does not put out his money at interest, and does not take a bribe against the innocent. He who does these things shall never be moved. Amen. The grass withers and the flower fades, but the Word of God endures forever. Well, as Sam describes, precisely the kind of person God wants to have in His tent. The picture of sojourning in the tent conjures up the idea of table fellowship. It picks pictures and reminds God dwelling in the midst of his people as they went from Egypt to the promised land, and the tabernacle followed them wherever they went. And more than the tabernacle, the tabernacling presence of God followed them wherever they went as well. Who shall dwell on your holy hill." The image turns from table fellowship in a tent, perhaps, to public worship at the temple, the holy hill of God. And the message of this, Sam,

is that only a holy people can dwell with a holy God. And the psalmist is asking this

evening, he's asking me, are you such a person? Are you such a man? Such a woman? Such a boy? Such

a girl? Are you a holy person? Now, holiness

is a term that smells a little bit like an old preacher's gown,

a bit musty and fusty and mothbally. It's kind of hard to capture

in the mind, what does holiness look like in the real world? Well, the term holy in Hebrew

is kadosh, and it literally means cut off. And it can be used to describe God's utter distinction from his creation, that the realm of the creature and the realm of the creator in no place collide except in the bathroom's manger when the Son of God becomes the Son of Man. But there's an absolutely qualitative and quantitative separation between God and his creation. And it was that way before the fall, and it's even that way in heaven between God and his angels. He is the creator, and they are the creatures. And they're absolutely different.

As we've said before, there's an infinite and forever divide separating the finite from the infinite, the created from the creator. So it's an absolute distinction

dividing the creator and the creature, but it also describes

an absolute separation dividing God from all that is unclean

and impure. It describes His moral, His spiritual

purity, that God is light, and in Him there is no darkness,

no none at all. That's the idea here. We need

to realize that when we think of God and we think of ourselves,

as Karl Barth says, you can't get to God by just calling man

in a loud voice. God is bigger than us and better

than us in a way that's far beyond our capacity to imagine, much

less touch. And we're prone to think that

our standards are just a little bit lower than his, or his standards

are a lot bit higher than ours, but they belong in completely different realms. Going back to my illustration about the traveling community, they don't smell bad to one another, but they smell bad to us. We live in different realms. We have different standards of cleanliness and of purity. Well, Psalm 15 fleshes out holiness. It puts muscle and skin on the bones and hands and feet on the limbs of what does a holy life look like. And that should interest you if you have any interest in going to heaven. Because the Bible says, without holiness, no one, no one shall see the Lord. That means without holiness, I'll not see the Lord. And it means without holiness, you'll not see the Lord, whoever you are or whatever your station is in life. And the psalm moves from the general to the particular. What's a holy life? What do we have to be and do to have fellowship with God? And the psalmist says two things. First of all, our lives must live up to God's standard with integrity. Our lives must live up to God's standard with integrity. Oh Lord, who shall abide? Who shall sojourn in your tent? Who shall dwell on your holy hill? Well, I'll tell you, he says. He who walks blamelessly and does what is right and speaks the truth in his heart. The word blameless here is describing, it's used in the Old Testament to describe a man's covenantal dealings with God. That his life with God is free from conspicuous and crippling faults. You might think of a wine glass. or just a common water glass in your house, and every so often they'll get chipped, right? And the glass might still look beautiful, but there's a chip on the edge, and you might not have enough glasses for your guests, and so you give them all the good glasses, and you keep the chipped glass to yourself. But it's amazing how that chipped side always ends up on your tongue side when you put it to your mouth, and you can feel that irregularity maybe cutting your tongue or your lip as you're drinking into it. It's an aggravation. The glass is pretty much good, but there's a conspicuous blot on its perfection. And that blot, it matters if you like having a tongue in one piece. Well, you might think of the seller's disclosure when you come to buy a house, which I have some personal experience with at the moment. And the house can look really good on the outside. They actually look pretty good on the inside. But when you go through the house and you look at the seller's disclosure, you might realize you've got a 40-year roof and 20-year air conditioning units. And you realize when you buy that house, you're buying a BMW, which means bring my wallet, right? Everywhere you go, you don't do anything and a BMW doesn't cost \$500. It's incredible. But it's nice to know what you're getting when you're buying a house, and the seller's disclosure lets you know, are there any, if the sellers are honest, that's why we have house inspections, but it lets

you know, are there any serious issues I need to know about before we get into a deeper contractual level of connection here in this whole process? And the psalmist says, the man who can dwell with God is a man who walks. Blamelessly, his life, his walk with God and man, but especially God, is free from conspicuous weakness and fault. He also does what is right. The word right, tzaddik in Hebrew

is the word righteousness. And Akai's the idea of measuring up to a standard, right? When you employ a builder to come into your home and do some work, you don't want him to kind of make his eye the standard of what is vertical and what is horizontal. You hope he'll use a plumb line or even a laser level if there's a lengthier piece of leveling to do. But the standards matter, and he brings everything back to that standard, and that makes sure your house goes straight up and down and is not a trapezoid or some other weird shape lurching to one side, like the famous tower in Pisa. It's important to realize that the standard to which we live is God's standard. It's not man's, right? You might

look pretty good to yourself, and I might look pretty good to myself. And don't forget, most of the real crud is hidden on the inside. We clean up pretty good in Colombia this evening. But we can look pretty good to

one another, and we can believe our own PR campaign, and we can believe pastors can easily believe the praise we receive at the door. And we think, well, things are going pretty well. But the standard to which we measure righteousness is not the opinions of men, the change, but the eternal standard of God, His law that is perfect. The man who can live with God, he does what is right. It's important to remember that, because we all have different standards, right? We have different standards of cleanliness. When I do pastoral visits, and

I'm not checking the cleanliness of your homes, ladies, but there are some homes I visit, and I'm pretty sure you or somebody you employ scrubs your baseboards in your house every week, and they pass the white glove standard. Not that I do that, of course, but I'm sure they would. I'm sure all of yours would. I remember one time I did a pastoral visitation once, and there wasn't dust on the baseboards. It was topsoil. And I sat in the living room, kind of my feet together. And actually, the living room was pretty tidy. But I looked out across the hall at the dining room. And I couldn't help but notice there were two piles of trash. When I say two piles of trash, I mean you'd think somebody got the waste bucket from their kitchen and turned it upside down twice in their dining room. And there were two lines of palmetto bugs making their way busily from one pile to the other. I think they were spoiled for choice. And I couldn't help but notice, it's the kind of thing that once you see, you can't unsee. I'm sitting there going, I'm looking across and trying not to look. It was kind of one of those awful moments. of pastor visitation,

but we had a pleasant visit apart from that. But it just struck me that this obviously was normal. I mean, there was no sense, there was no sense of panic in her mind. If that was me, the pastor was coming over, anyone was coming over, I'd be running and tidying it up and, you know, getting the blower right, trying to get some of the dust off the walls, I don't know. But it's amazing how we can have different standards as human being. And the thing is, our standards become normal to us. We have no idea how dirty and how unclean we really are. And then we take ourselves up into heaven, where the sun would appear like a dark spot, where there's a world of love without any hatred, bitterness, malice, a world of crystal clear purity, a world of peace where there's no discord, No frustration, no anger, no impatience. Just peace. And that's where we bring our sins out. That's where we bring our characters out, to be examined before the all-seeing eye of Almighty God. And that's what the psalmist is doing this evening. And these standards that we are called to meet must be met consistently, continually, and internally. They must be met consistently. Blameless is a perfect standard. Righteousness is an unforgiving standard. It requires absolute perfection. It's like golf. I played a lot of golf as a teenager and stopped. Golf's the kind of game that can make or break a human being. And it all comes down to the moment of impact when the club face meets the ball. It doesn't really matter what you do before that or even what you do after that. That's not entirely true, but it's half the truth. But what really matters is as the club hits the ball, it must be going fast enough, but the club must also be coming straight enough to hit that ball perfectly. And if that happens, you will experience one of the great joys of life. The ball will stroke off your club and it'll hardly even feel as if you've hit it and you'll have the joy of seeing the ball soar into the air and land approximately where you're aiming in the first place. But as they say, the devil's in the details. If that club face comes down to the ball inconsistently and inaccurately, Well, quite literally, anything can happen, and the ball can go anywhere. In fact, the only safe place can be behind the person or on the green where they're hoping the ball would go in the first place. To dwell in God's presence, we must meet his standard consistently, but it's even more stringent than that. We must meet it continually. In the Hebrew, there are five participles, which are I-N-G verbs, that carry the idea of continual, ongoing activity. It doesn't just say, who shall she adorn in your tent? He who walks blamelessly. No, the Hebrew says, he who is continually walking blamelessly. He who is continually doing what is right. He who is continually speaking the truth in his heart. It's also in verse four, in whose eyes a vile person is continually being despised. And then the end verse, he who is continually doing these things shall never be moved, shall never be cast out of God's house, is the idea. Again, just like the

game of
golf, hitting the ball well once isn't enough. You have to do
it again and again and again around the golf course to make
par. And the problem, as I've said
before, we often think our occasional good shot represents the real
you. Remember Lee Trevino was out
in a pro-am competition once with this rich oil tycoon from
Texas, and they were playing round, and this man was hacking
his way around the course and cursing and swearing and throwing
his driver into the woods and his one iron into the woods and
everything else. And after the fifth or sixth hole, Lee Javino
got a bit upset, and he said to the man, as the man's cursing
and swearing, you know, sir, you're not nearly good enough
at this game to get that angry. And the idea is that the man
thought his occasional once-in-a-round perfect shot, that was the real
him. The rest of it was just misfortune. No, the slice, the
hook, the dud, divot, the heavy shot, the shank, that's the real
him. That's the real you. And this righteousness The heart
of this righteousness, just like the heart in your chest, must
beat continually. That organ that pumps 600,000
gallons of blood around your body every year, it's an amazing
organ, never gets tired. If it stops, you have seven seconds of consciousness
left to enjoy. It's not enough that your heart
beat in the last second and this second. It's got to keep beating
every second or you're a dead man or a dead woman. And likewise,
the righteousness that God requires to live in His presence has got
to be consistent, but it's also got to be continually. consistently,
continually. And thirdly, it's got to also
be internally. It's not enough that we appear
good on the outside. The Pharisees, you remember,
appeared good on the outside. They were like whitewashed sepulchres.
The problem was, inside, they were full of dead men's bones.
They were like a coffee cup that looks pretty good on the outside,
but inside, it was full of groins. Coffee's been in there so long,
there's, I don't know, penicillin or something growing on the top
of it. And the psalmist says he must
speak the truth in his heart. Here's a man who's not just true
in what he does, and not just true on what he says, but he's
true in who he is. That his words that come out
match the man on the inside. He speaks truth. He's true in
his speech, but he's true in his words. He's not loving you
with his lips, but hating you in his heart. He's not worshiping
God with his lips, but thinking about his business in his heart. He's not a
hypocrite. There's
no disconnect between what he says and who he is. So our lives, to live in God's
presence, our lives must live up to God's standards with integrity,
verse two. But to dwell with God, our lives
must also live up to what Dr. Ferguson might call the nitty
gritties of life. Because you say to me, okay,
that's still hard to imagine. All this talk about blamelessness

and uprightness is all great in theory, but what's that look like on Monday morning? The psalmist highlights four key areas of Monday morning righteousness. The words we say, the people we like, the promises we make, and the business we do. First of all, the words we say.

He does not slander with his tongue. The Hebrew is, he does not walk about with his tongue. We've met people like that, haven't we? They're always talking about other people, and rarely in a positive fashion. I know ministers like that. And they've always got a but. So and so's a great preacher, but there's always a qualification.

And the funny thing is, the more time I spend with men like that, the less effect their pulpit ministry has upon me. I can't hear what they're saying because how they're living is speaking too loudly. Paul says to Titus, you must be sound in speech, which is above reproach. The righteous man is known by the words he says. He doesn't use his tongue to hurt his neighbor or to harm his friend. Does not slander with his tongue. He does no evil to his neighbor. And it's all speech in verse

3. Nor takes up a reproach against

his friend. When he hears of a scandal about

his friend, his near one, literally in the Hebrew, he's not prone to report it. There's no surer test of a man's

character or a woman's than to see how do they talk about their spouse in public. Mark it down as a rule, you should never,

ever, ever, speak a word of evil against your spouse in public. And the moment you do, you're

not telling me or anyone else, for that matter, about your spouse. You're telling me about yourself.

Because if they're not safe, then no one's safe. Now, of course, That's got nothing to do with you coming to me, or Pastor Squires, or Pastor Henderson, or any of the other ministers here, and seeking a word of counsel, or even going to a trusted friend. That's a different spirit. You're not tearing your spice

down. You're going to seek counsel. But it's amazing how often Christians

sanctify gossip purely for prayer. There's one pastor said, Simo

Ralevich, in his book, *The Tongue, Our Measure*, which is a very convicting book, it's a wee banner of truth book, I think it's out

of print now, but he says in that, some people's coffee is

only sweet if somebody else is being condemned over it. If you can't say amen, you better

say ouch, as Dr. Bauckham says. The words we say, the people

we like, in whose eyes a vile person is

despised, but who honors those who fear

the Lord." Now, he's not a self-righteous individual, this man, but he

knows the difference between good and evil. A vile person,

a rejected person is the idea in the Hebrew. A person who's

been rejected by God or a person who rejects God and is a despicable

person, the kind of person we read about in Psalm 14. But he honors those who fear the Lord. You know, the favorite verse people quote is Matthew

7, you know, do not judge lest you be judged. That's wonderful and it's true, of course, but in the next few verses, Jesus says, do not cast your pearls before swine. So whatever judgment means, it doesn't mean you can't in your heart decide, is this the kind of person who's safe to be entrusted with the pearls of the wisdom of God? There's a great illustration of this in Genesis 14. Derek Kidner says it illustrates the point and the potential cost of such wisdom. Remember whenever Abraham comes back from war, He's rescued a lot. It all began in verse 1. In the days Amraphel, king of Shinar, Ariok, king of Elessar, Cherdilumer, king of Elam, and Tidal, king of Goim, these kings made war with Bera, king of Sodom, Bersha, king of Gomorrah, Shinab, king of Admah, Shemeber, king of Zeboim, and the king of Bela, that is Zuar, and all these joined forces in the valley of Sidim, that is the Salt Sea. Twelve years they had served Chert-el-Lumer, but in the thirteenth year they rebelled. In the fourteenth year, Chert-el-Lumer and the kings who were with him came and defeated the Rephaim in Ashtoreth, Qarnaim, the Zuzim in Ghan, the Emim in Shaveth, Kiriathayim, and the Horites in the hill country of Seir, as far as El-Paran on the border of the wilderness. Then they turned back and came to En Mishpat, that is Kadesh, and defeated all the country of the Amalekites and also the Amorites who were dwelling in Chazazon, Tamar. Then the king of Sodom, the king of Gomorrah, the king of Admah, the king of Zeboim, and the king of Bela, that is Zohar, went out and they joined battle in the valley of Sidon. with Cherdilumer king of Elam, Tidal king of Goim, Amraphel king of Shinar, and Ariok king of Elessar, four kings against five. And the valley of Sidon was full of bitumen pits, and as the kings of Sodom and Gomorrah fled, some fell into them, and the rest fled to the hill country. So the enemy took all the possessions of Sodom and Gomorrah, and all their provisions, and went their way. They also took Lot, the son of Abram's brother, who was dwelling in Sodom, and his possessions, and went their way. And word comes to Abram, and Abram mounts up his commando raid and runs and rescues Lot. And he beats Tertillumar and the kings who are with him. And at the end of the battle, you remember, the king of Sodom, which is not a good place, went out to meet Abraham at the valley of Shavuot, that is the king's valley. And Melchizedek, king of Salem, brought out bread and wine. He was a priest of God most high and he blessed Abraham and said, blessed to be Abraham and so forth and so on. And then the king of Sodom and Gomorrah said to Abraham, give me the persons, but take the goods for yourself. But Abram said to the king of Sodom, I have lifted my hand to the Lord God most high, possessor of heaven and earth, that I would not take a thread or a sandal strap of anything that is yours, lest you should say, I have made Abram rich. I will take nothing but what the young men have eaten and the share of the men who went with me. Let Anar, Eschol, and Mamre take their share. And so

Abraham receives the blessing of Melchizedek, the king of righteousness. He's a man who fears God, this mysterious figure, read the book of Hebrews, and blesses Abraham. And then, when the King of Solomon comes, though, Abraham won't receive his blessing. He won't even receive that from him. Because the two kings are of entirely different character. And Abraham's integrity inclines him toward the one, and pushes him away from the other. And the people we like says an awful lot about us. As my grandmother said, show me your friends, and I'll tell you who you are. What kind of people draw you to them? Are they people, the trendy, cool people out in the world who make the darkness look bright? Maybe they're your friends, and maybe you pride yourself. I'm trying to win them for the gospel, but in reality, It's because they make sin look so classy and you're with them and you enjoy them. They're your people. But the people in the youth group or the young fellowship in the church, you look at them and they're the dweebs. They take God to, they're the holy Jews, they're weird. But it's not that they're weird, it's that you're weird. You've embraced a world where sin looks normal and holiness looks weird, and you're drawn to the world for precisely that reason, and you're repelled from your friends at church for precisely that reason, because they're with God and you are not. So the psalmist is telling you, you can tell an awful lot by the friends you keep, in whose eyes a worthless person is despised, but he honors those who fear the Lord. Are you the kind of person who's drawn to people who fear God, who love the Word of God, who love to seek the face of God in prayer, and who love the worship of God? The words we say, the people we like, the promises we make, he swears to his own hurt and does not change. He's a man whose word can be trusted. He'll not change his word to help himself, but he keeps his word to honor his commitment to God and to others. Now, the Bible gives us principles about escaping from a crushing commitment we've made. We can go and ask the person to be released from that commitment and hope that they will indeed release us from that commitment. But the basic rule here, the basic idea here is that we're a person whose promises, whose bond is true. Like your marriage vow, forsaking all others, I take thee. How does that vow measure up with what you do on the computer? Forsaking all others, I take thee. Maybe you're not married yet, and you think it's OK. Let me tell you, using pornography before you're married is a very, very bad strategy for not using it once you're married. And the business we do, who does not put out his money at interest, now he's not talking here about investing our money or lending money in interest, he's speaking about capitalizing on the poor and their extremity, cashing in on the misfortune of others, especially in the Kovner community,

the kind of cashing in that enslaves people with interest payments. No, the righteous man is concerned for his neighbor. He wants to help them, not himself. And so he doesn't give out predatory loans at extortionate interest rates and does not take a bribe against the innocent. He's more concerned with helping the weak than taking advantage of them. Money isn't the bottom line for this man or this woman. He who does these things, He who is doing these things shall never be moved. Let me taboo on this this evening. How do you stand before this psalm? How can any of us stand before this psalm? Do you see the need, your absolute need, your desperate need for a savior? Who, the Hebrew singular, What man is there? Almost echoes the words of the blind man or the paralyzed man from this morning's passage. I have no man. The psalmist is lamenting that. He looks at the world. It's almost even like saying, I can find no man. Is there any of us could live by the standards of this psalm? You think I can't believe God's that fastidious. You're that fastidious. How do you feel when you send an email? And I always tell people this, the only way I can find typographical errors in an email is to send it. And then they all jump off the page at me. And it's embarrassing. You've got a misspelt word, and you send it to some kind of nickety person. You think, oh, I can't believe I did that. I'm so stupid. They'll think I'm so stupid. Well, you're buying a new car. You've saved your pennies, you're going to buy a new car, no second-hand, beat-up old banger, but a new car! And you walk into the showroom, and there it is, and it's crystal clear, and the windscreen and the headlights are all beautiful, but there's just one ding in the side of the door. And you point it out to the salesman, and he goes, I can't believe you're that fastidious. What are you going to say to him? You're going to say, no, I am paying for perfection, and I want perfection. You look at a wall of orange bricks, and they're perfect, perfectly laid. And in the middle of the wall, there's just one dark purple brick. And you look at it, the wall could be a million miles wide, and your eye sees that one brick immediately. Because you're made in the image of God, you're designed to spot imperfections in other people and other things. And you immediately see it, and you first thought, why did that bricklayer, why could he be so foolish to put that brick in that place? He must have had a bunch of spare ones, but he sticks this purple one in the, I mean, it's crazy, right? And it's not just a case of one ding, you and me. I haven't got just one ding or one scratch. Our whole lives are inconsistent. It's not just that we fail to be continually righteous, but we've actually been continually sinful. Even our best deeds are filthy. I can't remember, I cannot remember the last time I ever sang a hymn all the way through without being distracted? Have you ever sang a hymn all

the way through about the glory of God? Holy, holy, holy. Lord God Almighty. And our minds

wandering here and there. We need a Savior. Often hear atheists say, if God was holy and just, there'd be no suffering in the world, they said. He would make sure good things happen to good people, and bad things happen to bad people, and the world would be at peace. The problem is, there are no good people. John Blanchard

said on that idea, if God were to change his policy to one of instantaneous reward and punishment, The whole world would immediately become a vast cemetery without one single person left to comment on the change. No, he says, God's generosity

and patience are in direct contrast to the heavy-handed wrath of man who loves to keep his quarrels going and to nurse his grievances. Oh, God does not treat us as

our sins deserve or repay us according to our iniquities. If, Blanchard says, we were to

understand the holiness of God and were fully aware of the true nature of sin, we would gasp in astonishment that God did not punish us more frequently or more severely. But as – but it's one thing to say – listen to me now – it's one thing to say God has not

yet dealt with us according to our sins. It's entirely another to assume that God won't ever deal with you according to your sins. Sin must be dealt with. And either you can deal with your own sins at the bar of God's justice, or you can have Christ

carry them there for you upon the cross. But make no mistake, your sins must be dealt with. If you want an example of what that looks like, look at God's beloved Son upon the cross. See Him hanging there, suspended

between heaven and hell, lost in the darkness. My God, my God, why have you forsaken me? And He's appearing there not in His own sins. He had none, but He's there in

your sins and mine, Christian. And God abandoned Him. abandoned him from his love to his wrath. And maybe you're here this evening, you're not yet a Christian. I'm telling you now, if God did not spare his own son when he came dressed up in other people's

sins as their substitute and savior, what will God not do to you if you have the temerity to ignore his offer of mercy and to stand before him on the last day clothed in sins that

you have committed and for which you alone bear full responsibility? Have mercy upon yourself and

run to a Savior. God's standards are that high,

but His mercy is that good, and His Son is that great. Because he alone has obeyed this psalm. He alone can look at every verse of this psalm and say, this is me. On the cross, as he's being cursed and laughed at and mocked by men. When he was reviled,

he did not revile in return, but said, Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do. And again and again in his life, constant righteousness. He can say to the Pharisees,

which of you convinces me of sin? perfect, blameless, spotless, holiness. Oh, this psalm should enthrall

us with Christ. It should draw us to him. What God requires, Christ provides. But it should also give us a standard by which to aim at. When you're playing golf, You don't walk out to the hole

and think, how many shots should I take at this hole? Now you look at the scorecard. It's a par three. That means it's got to be three. You might be a beginning golfer, but you don't start out on that tee box intending to take five shots or four. You want it to be three shots and no more. You begin every round, you're longing to be Scotty Sheffler at the Masters. Longing. Not one slice, not one hook, straight down the line, like the Lord in charge of fire when he's, remember he's practicing the hurdles and he put champagne glasses in each of the hurdles on his backyard, huge backyard, and he's sprinting down, he says to the butler, not one drop. He didn't wanna clip any of those hurdles to knock a drop of champagne out of those glasses. Not a drop, he said, not a drop.

That was the standard, that was his yearning. And the true Christian, oh, is yearning to work out his salvation with fear and trembling, to be all that Christ is and all that Christ wants. And he comes to this psalm, and Christ comes alongside him, and Christ comes alongside you. He puts his arm around us. and says, my brother or my sister.

Oh, he's not ashamed to call you brother or sister. That's a wonderful thing. And he says, oh, my brother or my sister.

Look at this psalm. You know who this psalm's describing?

And you look at Jesus, and you say, well, it's describing you, Jesus. And he says, yes, it is. But it's also describing you.

This is your future, Christian. As Derek Kidner says so beautifully, the qualities this psalm describes are not those that The qualities this psalm describes

are those that God creates in men, not those he finds in them. We take ourselves to this psalm.

This is the standard. This is the scorecard. How am

I doing? How am I doing in my heart? How

am I doing in my life? Are there any areas of conspicuous

disobedience to God? What about the words I say, and

the people that I'm friends with and I'm drawn to, and the promises

I make, and the business I do, my financial dealings, my domestic

dealings. Oh, Father, if there's one thing

I could improve. It's so easy, it's so easy in

life to be overwhelmed. I look at myself and I feel,

you know, it's like one of those tennis ball machines that fire

tennis balls at you. And at times, if each tennis

ball is a fault, I can see, it's like there's 1,000 tennis ball

machines firing 1,000 tennis balls And if there's, after the

first and second ball comes, you just stop, try and hit them

back, and you just kind of curl up and try and, you know, limit

the damage. And we can think of so many,

I'm dropping the balls in so many areas, I'm making so many

mistakes, and we can just trudge through life thinking, oh, Father. But just ask

yourself the question,
if there was one area of your life you could improve that would
make the biggest difference in your life, one area, in your
own individual walk with God, in your walk with your wife,
your children, at work, in the church, if there was one area
of your life that would make the biggest difference, which
would it be? And mark it down. And ask yourself,
Father, every day, pray, Lord, help me grow in this area. Strive
after it. Work it out with fear and trembling. And ask, Father, oh Lord, I'm
working out, but if I'm working out, I need you to be working
in me. to will and to do for your good pleasure. That's how
we grow. That's how we strive. That's
how we get our spiritual scorecard nearer to power, not to earn
our salvation. That's given us in Christ, but
it's to evidence the fact that we've been saved, that we want
to be like the Christ who has done so much to procure our salvation. Let's pray
together. Father in
heaven, we thank you for your word, its power, its truth. Forgive us for our sins,
oh God.
We fall short in so many ways. And I, as a preacher, will receive
a stricter judgment for my shortfalls. Help us, oh Lord, to lay aside
every weight and to run with endurance the race set before
us, looking unto Jesus, the author and the finisher of our faith.
In Christ's name, amen.