

Entering Into the Holy Place

by Ralph Sutera

The sermon emphasizes the importance of recognizing God as the sovereign owner of our lives, and the conditions for entering into the holiest place with Him, including clean hands, pure heart, and a desire to glorify God in every area of life.

Duration: 35:56

Scripture: Psalm 24:1, Psalm 24:3, Acts 3:26

Topics: "Holy Place"

Description

In this sermon, the preacher emphasizes that God's prime consideration in sending Jesus Christ to the world was to bless humanity. The preacher highlights that God wants us to experience a life of joy, dynamism, and vibrancy by surrendering our lives to Him. However, there are conditions for receiving God's blessings, including having clean hands, a pure heart, and not engaging in vanity or deceit. The sermon emphasizes that God desires to be the sovereign owner of everything in our lives, both now and in eternity, and encourages listeners to allow Jesus Christ to have complete control over their lives.

Transcript

Shall we stand together as we read Psalm 24? The earth is the Lord's, and the fullness thereof, the world and they that dwell therein. For he hath founded it upon the seas, and established it upon the floods. Who shall ascend into the hill of the Lord? For who shall stand in his holy place? He that hath clean hands and a pure heart, who hath not lifted up his soul unto vanity, nor sworn deceitfully.

He shall receive the blessing from the Lord, and righteousness from the God of his salvation. This is the generation of them that seek him, that seek thy face, O Jacob. Selah.

Lift up your heads, O ye gates, and be ye lifted up, ye everlasting doors, and the King of Glory shall come in. Who is this King of Glory? The Lord strong and mighty, the Lord mighty in battle. Lift up your heads, O ye gates, even lift them up, ye everlasting doors, and the King of Glory shall come in.

Who is this King of Glory? The Lord of hosts. He is the King of Glory. Selah.

Our Heavenly Father, I pray that Thou wilt take control of the remainder of this service as a result of our lifting up our heads, our hearts, our minds, for Thou art saved. I pray that this King of Glory shall truly come in. We shall know the reality of the King of Glory tonight, and that we may be able to truly sing, not I,

but Christ.

We thank Thee in His name. Amen. You may be seated.

This is a tremendous psalm. This psalm is called the song of the approach to God. If you remember the psalm in ancient history, you would have to read 2 Samuel chapter 6 to be able to understand how the ark of God had been taken into captivity.

The children of Israel were so concerned that their ark was not in its rightful place in the tabernacle area. The ark of God was a symbol and a pledge of God's glory and Jehovah's presence in the midst of His people. Whenever the ark was not present, it was as if the people were churching yet without a God, religious and yet without the presence of the true and the living God.

Prophetically, this psalm deals with the future coming of God and glory into His millennial city. It's a prospect of God's glory to come. But this psalm was probably sung when the ark was being taken back to Jerusalem.

It was now recaptured and the Jews were now taking the ark back to its final resting place and they were rejoicing that now the ark, the symbol of God's presence in their midst, was going to be in its rightful place. That's the background of this kind of a psalm. It's a tremendous psalm.

What a psalm of an approach to God. You see, the psalm starts out with God as the sovereign owner of the universe. The earth is the Lord's and the fullness thereof.

The world and they that dwell therein. And it ends with God as the sovereign owner of the heavens. Who is the King of glory? The Lord of hosts.

He is the King of glory. I think that's thrilling. The first verse, He is the sovereign owner of the universe.

The closing verse, He is the sovereign owner of the heavens. I believe that God is teaching us something tonight, the very outset of this crusade ministry, that He is anxious to be Lord of all. Lord of the heavens, Lord of the earth, the sovereign owner of it all.

And it's the first verse and the last, so that everything in between could be engulfed in those two tremendous truths. This ministry will emphasize that truth. God the sovereign owner of everything that we are and have and hope to be, so that when we go to glory, we can truly be fit for glory as a result of learning the Lordship and complete control of Jesus Christ in our lives right now.

The earth is the Lord's. The fullness thereof. The world.

And then it gets personal. They that dwell therein. That includes every single one of us.

That we belong to the Lord. That we are merely stewards of a trust. That our life is not our own.

That our life is given to us merely as a span between two great eternities. That our life is merely that which is to represent the King of glory. The sovereign owner of the earth and glory is the one who wants our lives to be a representation of himself.

If God could get a hold of our hearts tonight and teach us that, that there's not one thing we as believers own. In fact, we don't even own ourselves. That we are the Lord's.

Merely stewards. Entrusted with a divine trust, a heavenly treasure. And it's required of stewards that they be found faithful.

For if the truth of the Lordship and the total control and sovereignty of the Lord and control of our lives would grip our hearts, we would begin to enter into the reality of a life of joy and victory and dynamic, because there is no one any more frustrated than the man who lives with a problem of self-ownership. The man who has to run his own life acting as if he owns it. He is the one who lives with his own frustrations, because he can't blame anybody else for creating them.

But when we begin to sense a divine urgency and a divine unity with God about our lives, then we can understand the psalmist praying this kind of a prayer. The world and they that dwell therein, we're the Lord's. We're not our own.

Verse 2 gives us an idea about the God who owns us, about his foundation. For he hath founded it upon the seas, and established it upon the floods. Certainly if there is anything that would be an unsure foundation, those would be it.

What do you found on seas? What can you establish on floods? The waters with the rippling waves, the floods that seem to have a connotation of disaster and turmoil, and something that has gone out of bounds. God is saying to you and to me tonight, the one who owns the earth and the heavens, and who is the Lord and the sovereign of every individual who claims him to be the Lord of his life, is the one who has the ability to make stability out of even the greatest instability. That what humanly is impossible, with this divine sovereign owner in control, all things are possible.

That in the midst of a life of turmoil, and humanly speaking as it were, we see ourselves in our frailty, in our weakness, in our instability, yet if we could just allow this kind of a sovereign owner to control us, he has the ability to even establish our life, even if it were on waters and floods and on seas. Oh, what a God we're talking about! The divine paradox of this kind of a creator and sovereign. That what humanly is impossible, what humanly defies all law, God says, if you'll just allow me to control your life, I'll show you that in the midst of a life of uncertainty and frustration and instability, I can even make a foundation out of the floods and the seas, if I'm in control of your life.

But let's get the picture. The children of Israel are now behind the ark, and they're on their way back to the city, and the ark has just been recaptured. And they're rejoicing.

Oh, our ark is now coming back to its final resting place in Jerusalem. They're rejoicing that the pledge and the symbol of God's presence is now going to be among us because we've recaptured the ark. And in the midst of that kind of a processional, leading that ark back to the holy city and into its resting place, there comes a solemn consideration in a question that's offered.

That question is in verse 3. Who shall ascend into the hill of the Lord? Or who shall stand in His holy place? That seems strange. Here are all children of Israel. Here the Israelites are.

Why should they ask such a question? Do they not all qualify to ascend into the hill of the Lord, or to stand in His holy place? If every one of them behind the processional leading the ark back to the city would qualify, there would have been no need for that kind of a question. Remember, they were Israelites. Remember, they were all religious people.

They were people concerned about the ark and the tabernacle and the temple. They were concerned about their religious rights. And yet in the midst of that, the solemn consideration is that some will not qualify to enter into the holiest place.

Some will not qualify to ascend into the hill of the Lord. Oh, on this opening night of a crusade, that is a solemn consideration. That if we are content to just live a mediocre, half-hearted Christian life, then this crusade will be meaningless.

But if we tonight say, God, I don't only want to know that I'm on my way to heaven, but I want to know that heaven is living inside of me. I don't only want to know the Christ of glory, but I want the Christ of now to be in control of my life. I don't only want to live on leftover blessings, but I want to enter into the place where the Shekinah glory of God descends upon His people.

And you know that the ark was the place where the sacrifices would be placed, and the priest would go behind the veil into that holiest place. And it was a symbol of the holiest thing that God would do with His people. If we are content to stay on the outer fringes, almost like that beggar, the lame man at the gate of the temple in Acts chapter 3, who could hear everyone else going into the temple, but there he was at the outer gate of the temple, begging alms of those that entered in.

I've often wondered what a tragedy for a man to be that close to the gate of the temple and yet not be able to enter in. To be so close that he could hear in, and listen to the anthems of those who were enjoying the place of worship, and there he was at the outer gate. To have his hands literally begging, and yet still on the outer fringe.

Lame at the outer fringe of the temple where people would enter in. He was not deformed, he was merely lame. If I could say it tonight, religiously and theologically many of us might not be deformed.

We may know how to cross our I's and dot our I's and cross our T's religiously and theologically. All of those things may be straight, we may not be deformed. In fact, we may be so straight that we may have a tendency to look down on those who may not be so straight theologically.

But on the other hand, what good is it to be theologically straight and yet lame? You see, his legs needed not to be formed in a new way, but they needed strength. He needed to be able to stand on his own two feet to be able to enter in. It's typical of so many of us, who have all the theology, who have all the religion, who have all the worship, and yet we are lame in our spiritual condition, simply because we have not qualified to enter into that holiest place with God.

And in many of our lives, neither do we care to enter in, and we have become victims of a mediocre kind of society that says the average is the normal, and we allow the good to become the enemy of the best. We've enjoyed so many good things on the outer fringe that we don't even understand what we're missing by the best that God has to offer. God tonight is saying, I wonder if you really want to enter into that holiest place within.

Are you just tired of just living a half-hearted, mediocre kind of Christian life, and wondering whether there's any more to your Christian experience than this, and almost convincing yourself that the only thing God offers you tonight is a second rate way to live? Some of us have almost told ourselves that's true. That we see such mediocrity around us that we're almost convinced that mediocrity is normalcy. But oh, if our hearts could reach out tonight, say, God, I wonder if I'm going to qualify to enter in with such a

deep-seated hunger for reality and the fullness of God's Spirit within my life, that your kind of glory of God can descend upon my life and transform my Christian experience, and touch my home, and touch our children, and touch our church, and touch our community, and ignite a flame that could spark a moving of the Spirit of God, even that might touch a whole nation that so desperately needs an anointing from God.

Whom shall enter in? Whom shall stand in this holy place? What a solemn consideration. And I trust we search our own hearts, asking God whether or not we qualify. But the next verse gives us the searching conditions.

And therefore hold. Who enters into that holiest place with God? He that hath clean hands and a pure heart, who hath not lifted up his soul unto vanity, nor sworn deceitfully. And God says, the man who will do those things, verse 5 will be true for him.

He shall receive. There's no question about verse 5. The question is in verse 4. But there's a reality and there's a certainty about verse 5. It's not a matter of trying to persuade a reluctant God to bless us, but rather God getting a hold of our hearts in such a way that we will be broken before Him and honest before Him and open before Him, so that verse 4 can be, those conditions can be met. Then God says, He shall receive the blessing from the Lord and righteousness from the God of His salvation.

You know, I look at that verse and I see two directions that are in keeping with that song. Blessing from the Lord has to do with our life now and now. Righteousness from the God of salvation has to do with being clothed in the righteousness of God and being prepared for eternity.

Blessing from the Lord has to do with God, the sovereign owner of the universe, verse 1. Righteousness from the God of salvation has to do with the last verse, the King of glory. And thank God, someday we're going to rejoice as those who've been clothed with the righteousness of God here. And our salvation is going to remain complete around His throne forever and ever.

But is it a tragedy for us to talk about salvation and never know anything about the blessing of God now? God is not only the sovereign owner of the universe, the sovereign owner of the heavens, He owns the universe. And He's more concerned about blessing us now than we are to know His blessing. God in goodness and oneness, a good God is concerned about blessing us.

And He revealed that when He allowed heaven to be emptied of the dearest one He had. When Jesus Christ came to this black earth and was mocked upon and spit at and laughed at and one day laid outside the city walls of Jerusalem and there to the cross of Calvary. He died that ignominious death at the cross of Calvary and literally paid that price for our salvation.

Why was that all for us? Well, I read it in the third chapter of Acts when God reminds us why He emptied heaven of the dearest one He had. He said, God having sent His Son Jesus Christ first of all to bless us. That's it.

God's prime consideration in sending Jesus Christ to the world was so that you and I need not live a life of mediocrity. So that we can know the joy and the dynamic and the vibrancy there comes when the sovereign owner of the universe and glory becomes the sovereign owner of our lives as well. And He's concerned about blessing us now and in eternity.

If He's that concerned about blessing us, why not now? It's all wrapped up in verse four. The searching considerations and what conditions. Clean hands, pure heart had not lifted up his soul unto vanity nor

sworn deceitfully.

Four areas of an individual's life. First, clean hands. We do things and make things with our hands.

So God is saying to us, the man who wants to enter into the holiest place with God is the man who must make sure that his actions are right. His actions are right. His dealings are going to be right.

And we can pray all we know to pray for God's blessing in our life. And yet if we keep cheating the United States government on our federal income taxes, let's forget about God's blessing. Amen.

And if there's a neighbor we've wronged, and if there's a business associate that we've cheated unfairly, and if there's crookedness in our dealings, and there are certain actions of our life, whether in business or whether in everyday living, whatever it is God is saying to us, that if you're really honest about revival, and honest about my blessing, and honest about entering into the holiest place where there can be truly a moving of God's Spirit, that we're going to be honest about making sure that every action of our life is right. Clean hands. Or if we could take that truth alone and find what God's Word says about clean hands, and how we're going to cleanse our hands, sinners.

It talks about cleansing our hands. And how many of us have put up with so much in our lives, and we know that God cannot hear us as long as we regard iniquity in our heart, and yet we are hypocritical about praying for revival when we know, just as sure as we know anything, that there are actions, there are dealings, there are circumstances in our life that we allow to exist that are not right, that are sin, and we're not honest about it. God says you want to enter in, your actions must be right.

Secondly, pure heart. God is saying, your attitudes need to be right. Jesus said, blessed are the pure in heart.

The pure in heart. It doesn't mean perfect in heart, or perfect in action primarily, but it's perfect in intention. You see, the pure and perfect heart the Lord talks about.

It means when God begins to see us as those whose hearts are perfect toward Him. That means there is a singleness of motivation. It means that the attitude of our heart is that God shall receive glory in every area of our life.

Whether therefore we eat, or whether we drink, or whatsoever we do, we do it to the glory of God. And what kind of a revival would Akron have if all of us were not concerned who got the credit for it? Isn't it amazing how our service for God in quotes seems to drop off when the pastor doesn't give us credit for it? And how many of our prayers have been prayed out of motives that have not been right? More concerned about having things better at home than having a husband converted because his life needs the glory of my God. More concerned about God doing something so that we can have something to say rather than God receiving glory for.

And these days, God is going to deal with us about sin in the inner man. Not only the outward dealings, but the inward attitudes. Saturday night we read those words where the psalmist David prayed, Lord, that I might be cleansed and clean.

He said, Lord, thou desirest truth in the inward parts. And if there's ever any day in our calendar through the year that we as Americans seem to be more adept at than any other, it's Halloween. We love wearing masks.

We seem to be used to it. Especially on Sunday morning. And we've had a war in the car all the way to church, but as soon as we walk inside the church, we look like saints.

In so many areas of hidden dishonesty in our attitudes, God's saying, if you're going to enter into that holiest place, then I'm going to search your motives, your attitudes. What kind of an attitude are you serving me? In what attitude? Your attitudes toward God. Your attitudes toward the work of God.

Toward the people of God. Toward the church of God. Your attitudes toward the word of God.

Your attitudes about sin. Your attitudes need to be right. A pure heart so that we serve God in simplicity and singleness and purity.

There's a third qualification, who hath not lifted up his soul unto vanity. God is saying, if you want to enter into that holiest place, then don't become vain in your way of living. Why does God use the word vanity? Because God is saying, your affections need to be made right.

Vanity is a piece of furniture that most of us have in our bedroom. Don't we men? Mainly for our wife. It's a piece that spreads from door to door.

And one thing it has to be sure to have is a large mirror. And enough counter space so that it can take care of all the cold creams, warm creams, hot creams, colors, shades, tints, smells, brushes, combs, so on. You say, are you speaking against that? No, not really.

I'd hate to see some if they didn't have that. But the furniture people have given it the right name. They've called it a vanity.

I wonder why. Here's the truth. Because that piece of furniture has everything to do with fixing up the outward part of man or woman.

It has to do with the external but cannot affect the inner part of a being. It changes the color, the tint, the shade, and it has a way of flattering a person by looking at yourself long enough. And taking pride in how well you were able to improve what God gave you to work with.

But it has nothing to do with the inner man. It's concerned about the external rather than the internal. It's temporary rather than eternal.

For the next day you have to go back to it. And it has to do with the outer man. God is saying to us tonight, the person who talks about wanting the blessing of God but his whole way of living is temporal and external and has no concern about the inner man and the eternal, he's become vain in his way of living.

That man will never qualify to enter in. Many have become vain in their home life. Vain in the home they live in.

Vain in the kind of pleasures and amusements that literally motivate their being. Vain in luxury. Vain even in business.

Vain in so many good things that in themselves are perfectly right and legitimate but because they are taken out of context and abused they now become sin and cause us to become vain in our way of living. They're the kind of people who would be in prayer meeting but that's a good night to clean the basement. And they're the kind who are more concerned about what their home looks like than they are the

heartbreaking condition of the world on the brink of hell.

Now there's no difference between the secular and the sacred for a Christian. It's just as sacred for a Christian to keep a house clean and to keep the dishes out of the sink as it is for me to stand behind this pulpit and preach. A lady came to me one night and she said, you know preacher, God has called me into the ministry.

She said, I don't know how it's going to happen now. I have six little tiny pots at home but I'm ready to leave them and go into the ministry. I said, ma'am, God's called you into the ministry alright but you don't have to leave them to do it.

God's ministry to you and your ministry for God's glory is to keep that home for those children because there's no difference between the secular and sacred. It's all sacred for a Christian. And the most beautiful thing about walking in a spirit-filled life is that the common ordinary occurrences of life take on a beautiful divine dimension when Jesus Christ is in the middle of it all.

But it is a tragedy on the other hand when we allow business and pleasure and friends and comfort and ease and vanity and our whole way of living rob us from entering into that holiest place. God tonight is saying, you want to enter in? What about your way of living? Your priorities? And then a fourth thing he says, nor sworn deceitfully. Now swearing has to do with the use of the tongue.

When a man is in court he says, I swear to tell the truth, the whole truth, nothing but the truth, so help me God. Swearing has to do with the use of the tongue. And God is saying, not only must your actions be right, your attitudes be right, your affections be set on things above, they must be right, but your affirmations must be right.

What you affirm from your lips must be evidenced by your walk. Now let me ask you, how many promises have you made to God and have not kept them? How many times you have, in quotes, dedicated yourself to God at a dedication meeting and two weeks later forgot about what you told God? How many words have we spoken to God that had no meaning? Idle words. An idle word is a word that is uttered that has no meaning.

And God says that when we stand before Him in the day of judgment, we shall give an account of every idle word. And oh, the idle words that many of us in this meeting tonight have sung in our songbook, as we've sung sweet our prayer and can hardly stand five minutes. Tis so sweet to trust in Jesus and yet want to run our own life.

I'll go where you want me to go, dear Lord, but whisper underneath our breath, if I can dictate the terms. And we've been deceitful with the vows we've made to God. And these days, God is going to say to us, what about all those promises? You want to know victory and power and dynamic and a dimension in your Christian life such as you've never known before? Here's how.

Make sure that no longer are you going to be swearing deceitfully. The use of the tongue is going to be used for God's glory. And it's going to be truthful.

And it's going to be backed by action. So that now you can untie the hands of God and verse five can become a reality. He shall receive a blessing from the Lord.

I pause one moment to remind us that God never intended for the Christian's tongue to be used for the devil's roar. Someone has said the den of lions is located right behind your teeth. Your tongue is in a wet place.

Be careful that it doesn't slip. Keep your words soft and sweet because you never know when you'll have to eat them. And oh, how many churches have been ruined by a gossiping tongue.

How many pastors have been ruined by slander. How much shame has come on the name of Christ because of the telephone conversations that start out like this. I'm not gossiping butt.

And it takes a half hour to go on with the butt. Someone has said you can always tell a goat by the way it butts. And God is saying to us tonight, do you really want to enter in? Do you really want the sovereign owner of the heavens? The sovereign owner of the universe? To establish your life? When humanly possible you see no way of stability? All right.

Face the conditions. And enter in. You know, when I look at that verse 4, dealings, attitudes, affections, words, you know what I see? I see a picture of the whole man.

I say, that verse says to me, only a total commitment to Jesus Christ can know anything about this. Only a coming to the end of yourself saying, God, all that I am and have and hope to be, my actions, my attitudes, my affections, my words, my whole being is encompassed in being laid at the foot of the cross for Him to control it.

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