

Psalm 84

To the chief Musician upon Gittith, A Psalm for the sons of Korah.

Clearly a Son of Zion, this psalm expresses the rejoicing of a pilgrim who has made his way to the temple in Jerusalem. The psalm contains three key notes: the blessedness of those who dwell at the temple (verses 1-4), the blessedness of those who come to the temple (verses 5-7), and the blessedness of all who trust in the Lord (verses 8-12). “Baca” (verse 6), appears to refer to a shrub that grows in arid places and thus points to the hardships endured by the pilgrim on his way to the Holy city.

Verses 1-12: This psalm, like other psalms of ascent (Psalms 120-134), expresses the joy of a pilgrim traveling up to Jerusalem, then up into the temple to celebrate one of the feasts. The pilgrim focuses his attention especially on the thought of being in the very presence of the Lord God. The New Testament believer-priest, in an even greater way, can come into the presence of the Lord (compare Heb. 4:16; 10:19-22).

- I. The Expectation of Worshiping God (84:1-4).
- II. The Expedition to Worship God (84:5-7).
- III. The Elation at Worshiping God (84:8-12).

Title: “On the Gittith” (see note on Psalm 8: Title).

“Sons of Korah”: These descendants of Levi through Kohath were the gatekeepers and musicians in the temple at Jerusalem (1 Chron. 6:22; 9:17-32; 26:1; see all Psalms 42-49; 84-85; 87-88).

Verses 1-7: The ordinances of God are the believer's solace in this evil world. In them he enjoys the presence of the living God: this causes him to regret his absence from them. They are to his soul as the nest to the bird. Yet they are only an earnest of the happiness of heaven; but how can men desire to enter that holy habitation, who complain of Divine ordinances as wearisome? Those are truly happy, who go forth, and go on in the exercise of religion, in the strength of the grace of Jesus Christ, from whom all our sufficiency is. The pilgrims to the heavenly city may have to pass through many a valley of weeping, and many a thirsty desert. But wells of salvation shall be opened for them, and consolations sent for their support. Those that press forward in their Christian course, shall find God add grace to their graces. And those who grow in grace, shall be perfect in glory.

Psalm 84:1 "How amiable [are] thy tabernacles, O LORD of hosts!"

“Amiable are thy tabernacles”: The temple worship center was lovely because it enabled the Old Testament saint to come into the presence of God (compare Psalms 27; 42:1-2; 61:4; 63:1-2).

“Lord of hosts”: “Hosts” represent God’s angelic armies, thus God’s omnipotence over all powers in heaven and on earth (compare verses 3, 8, 12).

Amiable, in the verse above, means loved or well-beloved. This is the only use of this word in all the Bible. There is so much in this little verse. Let us first look at the tabernacle. The tabernacle in the wilderness was a place where God met with His people. It was patterned after the true tabernacle which is in heaven. When the people could go to the tabernacle, it was a point of contact with Almighty God.

Hebrews 8:5 "Who serve unto the example and shadow of heavenly things, as Moses was admonished of God when he was about to make the tabernacle: for, See, saith he, [that] thou make all things according to the pattern shewed to thee in the mount."

As we always do, in these lessons, let us look at what it means to the Christian.

Revelation 21:3 "And I heard a great voice out of heaven saying, Behold, the tabernacle of God [is] with men, and he will dwell with them, and they shall be his people, and God himself shall be with them, [and be] their God."

Let us look at one more Scripture on the tabernacle.

2 Corinthians 5:1 "For we know that if our earthly house of [this] tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God, an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens."

The most beautiful thing in all the earth is believers worshipping their God. The Jews came to the tabernacle to do just that on feast days. Christians gather on Sundays. To take away the privilege to worship with others of like faith, would be to tear our heart out. The tabernacle was the center point of the tents when they travelled. This should still be true. Our worship of God should be the center of our life. God's desire is to tabernacle in the very center of our being.

Psalm 84:2 "My soul longeth, yea, even fainteth for the courts of the LORD: my heart and my flesh crieth out for the living God."

"Longeth ... fainteth ... crieth out": The psalmist is consumed with his happy, but intense desire to worship God in the temple.

I will begin this by asking, do we long for fellowship with God? Is God the focal point of our life? Are we feeling as if we want to go and worship God, or do we go because it is an obligation? In recent years, an area in China made it illegal to worship God publicly. After years of not being able to go to church, the government allowed the people to worship again. People waited 10 or 12 hours for the privilege of attending church. The problem is, we do not miss the privilege, until it is taken away from us. Perhaps, the psalmist had been forbidden to gather with the Lord and the Lord's people. It was as if he would die, if he could not go to the court of the Lord and worship. His bones ached, his flesh felt dead, in fact even his heart within him was breaking to be with the living God. You have heard me say before that, I refuse to go to a church where it is apparent that the Spirit of God is not there. Church, to me, is fellowshiping with my Savior.

Psalm 84:3 "Yea, the sparrow hath found a house, and the swallow a nest for herself, where she may lay her young, [even] thine altars, O LORD of hosts, my King, and my God."

“Sparrow ... swallow”: The psalmist admires these birds who were able to build their nests in the temple courtyards, near the altars of God.

Everything God created has a place. As the verse above says, for the swallow it is a nest. There is a longing put inside every person who was ever born, to feel what that swallow feels, when she is in her nest. We all have a desire to worship someone who is better than what this world has to offer. We all have a need of belonging to someone. This someone we are seeking is God. I believe this Psalm is David's and I believe he is saying, I must go to the altar and meet with the LORD of hosts, my King, and my God. This is a longing that cannot be satisfied anywhere else.

Psalm 84:4 "Blessed [are] they that dwell in thy house: they will be still praising thee. Selah."

“Blessed”: This word is used 3 times (verses 4, 5, 12), to describe the happiness of those who, like the sons of Korah, “lodged round about the house of God” (1 Chron. 9:27).

Dwell means to continually live. David is speaking of how blessed are those who never have to leave the temple. They can praise the Lord all the day long. There is something about a church, or a tabernacle in their case, that causes us to want to worship and praise God. Of course, you can praise and worship Him wherever you are, but there is something special about the church.

Psalm 84:5 "Blessed [is] the man whose strength [is] in thee; in whose heart [are] the ways [of them]."

Or, "for thee", as some choose to render the words. Who have bodily strength from the Lord, for his worship and service, to go up to his house, and serve him. This, with what follows in the two next verses, seem to refer to the males in Israel going up from different parts of the land to Jerusalem to worship, who had strength so to do. The Targum is, "whose strength is in thy Word." The essential Word, the Messiah, who have spiritual strength in and from him (see Isa. 45:24). Without this there is no heart to go up to the house of God. And this will carry through a great deal of bodily weakness; and by it saints overcome the temptations of Satan to the contrary, and perform the several duties of religion.

"In whose heart are the ways of them": Or "thy ways"; the ways of God, the ways of Zion, the ways to the house of God. Who have these ways at heart, who ask the way to Zion with their face thitherward; who have not only ability, but inclination and readiness of mind, to walk in them. Whose hearts are bent upon them, regarding no objection, difficulty, and discouragement. Who stir up themselves and others to go up to the house of God, and are heartily desirous of being taught his ways, and walking in them, and take great pleasure and delight therein. They are ways of pleasantness and paths of peace to them. The word properly signifies "highways", ways cast up. Some render it "ascensions in his heart"; the affections of whose heart go up to God. Like pillars of smoke perfumed with frankincense, are after God, his ways and worship, and are set on things above.

He has already gone into detail about how wonderful it is to live continually in God's house. He now says also, how wonderful it would be to be allowed to go on the special feast days and worship. It appears for some reason he has been denied this. Those who understand their own weaknesses are more apt to depend on the strength of God.

2 Corinthians 12:9 "And he said unto me, My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness. Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me."

In my weakness, I depend upon the strength of God to get me through. Our heart would be stayed upon Him, if He was our strength.

Psalm 84:6 "[Who] passing through the valley of Baca make it a well; the rain also filleth the pools."

"Valley of Baca": "Baca" can be translated as "weeping" or "balsam tree". The valley was an arid place on the way to Jerusalem.

"Make it a well": The pilgrims traveling to a festival of worship at Jerusalem turn an arid valley into a place of joy.

This perhaps, is speaking of journeying to the sanctuary or temple. Many came from miles around on the feast days to the temple in Jerusalem to worship. God had provided wells along the way to keep them from dying of thirst. Some of the wells of Old Testament time are still giving water today. As they refreshed and got a drink at these wells, they would have an opportunity to visit with others going to or from Jerusalem.

Psalm 84:7 "They go from strength to strength, [every one of them] in Zion appeareth before God."

"From strength to strength": Anticipation of joyous worship of God in Jerusalem overcame the pilgrims' natural weariness in their difficult journey.

"Zion" (see note on Psalm 87:2).

Three times a year all the males over 12 years old had to attend services in the temple at Jerusalem. It seemed the nearer they got to their place of worship, the stronger they got. In the physical, the place of worship was in Zion in Jerusalem. In Revelation, we saw that Jesus (the Light), was in all the churches where He was worshipped. You can see that the Christians too, appeared before God.

Verses 8-12: In all our addresses to God, we must desire that he would look on Christ, his Anointed One, and accept us for his sake. We must look to Him with faith, and then God will with favor look upon the face of the Anointed: we, without him, dare not show our faces. The psalmist pleads love to God's ordinances. Let us account one day in God's courts better than a thousand spent elsewhere; and deem the least place in his service preferable to the highest earthly preferment. We are here in darkness, but if God be our God, he will be to us a Sun, to enlighten and enliven us, to guide and direct us. We are here in danger, but he will be to us a Shield, to secure us from the fiery darts that fly thick about us. Through he has not promised to give riches and dignities, he has promised to give grace and glory to all that seek them in his appointed way. And what is grace, but heaven begun below, in the knowledge, love, and service

of God? What is glory, but the completion of this happiness, in being made like to him, and in fully enjoying him forever? Let it be our care to walk uprightly, and then let us trust God to give us everything that is good for us. If we cannot go to the house of the Lord, we may go by faith to the Lord of the house; in him we shall be happy, and may be easy. That man is really happy, whatever his outward circumstances may be, who trusts in the Lord of hosts, the God of Jacob.

Psalm 84:8 "O LORD God of hosts, hear my prayer: give ear, O God of Jacob. Selah."

The redemption of the captives, says Kimchi; for the building of the house, the temple. According to Jarchi. But rather for the courts of God, an opportunity of attending them, and for the presence of God in them (see Psalm 84:2). In which he might hope to succeed, from the consideration of the Lord's being the God of hosts, or armies, in heaven and in earth. And so was able to do everything for him, and more for him than he could ask or think. His arm was not shortened, nor his ear heavy (Isa. 59:1), and as this character is expressive of his power, the following is of his grace.

"Give ear, O God of Jacob": He being the covenant God of the people of Israel in general, and of David in particular. From whence he might comfortably conclude he would give ear to him, and it carries in it an argument why he should.

This seems to be a cry for audience with God. He wants to go to the temple and worship, but if he cannot, then hear his prayer where he is. Of course, Selah means pause and think on these things.

Psalm 84:9 "Behold, O God our shield, and look upon the face of thine anointed."

"Behold, O God our shield": A metaphor for the king, who also would have participated in a festival at the temple (compare Psalm 47:9; Hosea 4:18).

"The face of thine anointed": The king is regularly described as God's "anointed" (Psalms 2:2; 18:50; 20:6; 28:8; 89:38, 51). The psalmist thus prays that God would look upon the king with favor, blessing his reign with prosperity.

This just must be David (the anointed). This is a prayer to the protector of all believers to hear their prayer.

Psalm 84:10 "For a day in thy courts [is] better than a thousand. I had rather be a doorkeeper in the house of my God, than to dwell in the tents of wickedness."

"I had rather be a doorkeeper": One day standing at the door of the temple, or just being near even if not inside, was better than a thousand days fellowshiping with the wicked.

If the psalmist had only one day to live, he would rather be the lowly "doorkeeper" in the "house" of God than enjoy all the wealth and luxury of evil. He would rather be found serving the Lord than serving himself. "My God" implies a sense of devotion to God.

Whatever humble Job, that God would have him do, would be just fine with him as long as he could be with God. I have said so many times, I do not care what my mansion in heaven looks

like, I just want to be with Jesus. All the splendid living in the world away from God is not worth being away from God.

Psalm 84:11 "For the LORD God [is] a sun and shield: the LORD will give grace and glory: no good [thing] will he withhold from them that walk uprightly."

“Sun and shield”: This pictures God’s overall provision and protection.

This is speaking of having protection and Light. The Lord controls the sun and the moon. Jesus brought us grace and glory, when he was crucified.

Ephesians 2:8 "For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: [it is] the gift of God:"

Romans 5:15 "But not as the offence, so also [is] the free gift. For if through the offence of one many be dead, much more the grace of God, and the gift by grace, [which is] by one man, Jesus Christ, hath abounded unto many."

It is really difficult for us to understand how the crucifixion of Jesus glorified the Father, but it did as we see in the following verse.

John 17:1 "These words spake Jesus, and lifted up his eyes to heaven, and said, Father, the hour is come; glorify thy Son, that thy Son also may glorify thee:"

We Christians take on the righteousness of Christ, when we are saved. We are in right standing with God, just as if we had never sinned. If we walk in that righteousness that Jesus purchased for us on Calvary, no good thing will be withheld from us. We will be joint-heirs with Jesus.

Romans 8:17 "And if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and jointheirs with Christ; if so be that we suffer with [him], that we may be also glorified together."

Psalm 84:12 "O LORD of hosts, blessed [is] the man that trusteth in thee."

For grace and glory, and every good thing; that trusts in the Lord at all times, and not in the creature, or in an arm of flesh. But in the Lord of hosts and armies, in whom is everlasting strength, and is the sun and shield of his people. Happy are such that trust in him, whether they have ability or opportunity of going up to the house of the Lord, or not. They are happy that have and make use thereof, and so are they that trust in the Lord, whether they have or not. They are safe, being as Mount Zion, which can never be removed. And do and shall enjoy perfect peace and solid comfort here, and eternal happiness hereafter (see Jer. 17:5). The Targum is, "blessed is the man that trusteth in thy Word;" in Christ, the essential Word.

How much more blessed could you be than to be part of the family of God? To trust in Him, is as if we are resting in the knowledge that all is well with our soul.

Ephesians 4:13” “Till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ:

Philippians 2:24 "But I trust in the Lord that I also myself shall come shortly."

To trust in God is life everlasting.

Psalm 84 Questions

1. What does amiable, in verse one, mean?
2. What was the tabernacle in the wilderness?
3. What was it patterned after?
4. What does 2 Corinthians 5:1 call a tabernacle?
5. What would it be like to take away our privilege to worship with others?
6. Do we long for fellowship with God?
7. Why do we go to church?
8. We do not miss the privilege of worship, until it is _____.
9. The someone we are all seeking is _____.
10. What does dwell mean?
11. Who are the blessed in verse 5?
12. In verse 6, passing through the valley of Baca is speaking of what?
13. How many times a year were all the males above 12 years old required to go to the temple to worship?
14. Where was Zion physically?
15. What book of the Bible tells us that Jesus is in all the churches who believe in Him?
16. What is God called in verse 9?
17. To be near God, David was willing to be what?
18. Glorify the Son that the Son might _____.
19. Where do we find that Christians will be jointheirs with Jesus?