

## Psalm 84

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In attempting an outline of this most encouraging Psalm, it may be helpful to indicate its setting in the inspired collection. The Psalms are divided into five books, and Psalm 84 comes in the third book, where the ways of God with His ancient people are found. This speaks of experience and we shall see clearly that this is an experimental Psalm.

The first item of interest in Psalm 84 is the heading "To the chief Musician. Upon Gittith. Of the sons of Korah" (New Trans.). Two other Psalms carry this introduction — 8 and 81 — with this distinction, Psalm 8 links it with David and Psalm 81 with Asaph. The meaning of Gittith does not seem to be clear but the word being linked in some way with Gath or the wine vat seems to suggest the thought of rejoicing; perhaps a joyful celebration of the blessings connected with the dwelling place of Jehovah of Hosts.

The Psalm is dedicated to the sons of Korah, who stand out as a notable example of the sovereign mercy of God. They were the descendants of men who broke into open revolt against Moses and were consumed by a fire which came out from Jehovah, Numbers 16: 35. But in Numbers 26: 11 we read, "Notwithstanding the children of Korah died not." Thus we may consider this Psalm to be a joyful celebration of the grace of God who, instead of cutting them off in judgment, brought them nigh to Himself and gave them a place of favour in His own dwelling.

The Psalm is divided into three portions of four verses each. Selah — pause — occurs at the end of verse 4 and verse 8. These divisions may bear some likeness to the three sections of the family of God mentioned by John in his first epistle, the language of the first four verses describing the condition and apprehension of the fathers; the next four verses a description of the young men, while the last four seem to be more applicable to the little children. Yet whether fathers, young men or little children, there is encouragement for all in every verse in this Psalm.

In considering the first four verses applicable to the fathers in the family of God, we commence with the appreciative outburst, "How amiable are Thy tabernacles, O Lord of hosts!" This word "amiable" comes from a root meaning "beloved" and would suggest that, as the outcome of possessing the divine nature, we love the habitation of God, not only as having responsibility in regard to the divine centre, but desiring to constantly live there in the experience of our souls. "Jehovah of Hosts" would remind us of His greatness and supremacy in the universe, yet graciously encouraging us to come into His presence as in spiritual fellowship with Himself, knowing Him today as Father. John says of the fathers, "Ye have known Him that is from the beginning."

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

Brethren, do we long for the company of divine Persons like this? Certainly the writer of this Psalm was fainting to be there. "The courts of Jehovah" had a living attraction for him, for there he had the blessed experience of being consciously in the presence of the "living God." The name used here for "God" is the Hebrew "El," which means "The mighty God," or "Victorious Power." Surely communion with such a God would enable us to gain the victory over the world!

"Yea, the sparrow hath found an 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," verse 3. The sparrow would suggest that which is of little worth, and the swallow would speak of restlessness. The one finding every needed *provision* in the house of God, and the other knowing its *protection*. How safe we are when there in spirit! Moreover, the swallow with this feeling of safety rears her young there, and where better to bring up those we are responsible for than in the circle where God is known? If we have found protection from this evil world in the divine circle, where better to bring our children? Safety is found in this circle, salvation "from this present evil world."

"Thine altars," would have in view both the altar of burnt offering and the altar of incense. In the first, the suggestion of *acceptance*, and in the second that of *access*. As the fruit of the first, as moving in our daily pathways we have the knowledge that every question between our souls and God has been settled by the work of our Lord Jesus Christ, and our acceptance by faith of that work is the means whereby we have been brought into right relation with God. As the result of this, we can come at all times into the presence of God and, like incense ascending, are able to pour out our hearts in thanksgiving and praise to our God in appreciation of it all. Linked with this we have the expression "my King, and my God." The first suggests the recognition of the rights of God, we are subject to His *will*; in the second, He becomes the Object of our *worship*. How good to notice the personal pronoun used so often by the writer. Not only are we to experience what God is to *His people*, but to know experimentally what God is to each one personally. There is perhaps the danger of being submerged in a company; personal communion with God is what each believer must experience if we are to know the spiritual prosperity outlined in a Psalm like this.

"Blessed are they that dwell in Thy house; they will be still praising Thee," verse 4. What else could be the outcome of consciously dwelling in the house of God but continuity of praise? The word "still" means "continually." If then we do enjoy the *privilege* of dwelling there, we must give expression in *praise*. We know from the New Testament that the House of God is the sphere in which God is approached and also that through which God is displayed, yet we should ever remember that only as we *do* know the blessedness of approach to God shall we be fitted to display Him as we ought. The epistle to the Hebrews is anti-typical in its use of the tabernacle and is where we learn the liberty of approach, while Peter in his first epistle has in view display as the anti-type of the temple.

May we know what it is to be kept in constant touch with our God by the Holy Spirit, and thus be more able to rightly represent Him in the world through which we are passing. It is in the next section of our Psalm that display comes more into view, but if we fail to lay hold upon the resources which are available to us in the House of God, we shall not move in spiritual power and testimony through the valleys of this world.

At the end of verse 4 we meet that well known word, "Selah" — "pause and consider." Let us then consider these typical themes with a view to knowing them better and above all seeking to be characterized by them.

## Psalm 84: 5-12

"Blessed is the man whose strength is in Thee; in whose heart are the ways of them," (v. 5). Or, "They in whose heart are the highways" (New Trans.). These two thoughts would suggest *power* and *purpose*. This section of the Psalm would appear to be in line with the words of the apostle John, "I write unto you, young men, because ye have overcome the wicked one." Also, "I have written unto you, young men, because ye are strong," (1 John 2: 13, 14). They had been strengthened by the Word of God abiding in them, and it could be truly said of them that their *strength was in God*. Springing out

of this they are marked by true purpose of heart, the highways of God. Where else could these highways be learned but from the Word of God? Having the light of these highways they had set their hearts upon them. This word "highways" would indicate the main lines along which God is moving to accomplish His eternal purpose. The truth of the assembly as taught by Paul; that of the heavenly family as taught by John; and the display of the glory in the coming kingdom as taught by Peter, are some of the highways of God as seen in His word. There was a time in the history of Israel when the enemy drove the people of God from these highways and they were obliged to tread in byways (Judges 5: 6). May we hold these highways in our hearts and tread them in our experience.

"Who passing through the valley of Baca make it a well; the rain also filleth the pools," (v. 6). The two thoughts here have been well described as *sorrow* and *sowing*. The second half of the verse reads in the New Translation — "The early rain covereth it with blessings." There were two seasons in Canaan when these refreshing showers came down, the early and the latter rain (cf. Deuteronomy 11: 14 and James 5: 7). The early rain was sent to germinate the seed and the latter rain to ripen the harvest. How well we know that the harvest results only from the sowing! It is encouraging to learn that God will help us in both if conditions are according to His mind.

The first half of this verse has weeping in view, for Baca means "weeping." No one can move for God in this hostile world without experiencing disappointments and sorrows, but we look back to many a testing period and trace in them the beginning of a new exercise with God, which ultimately produced a harvest of blessing for ourselves and fruit for God — weeping turned thus into a "well-spring" (New Trans.). Only as passing through this world in communion with the Father and with the Son are such results produced. In this way we overcome the wicked one, passing through this hostile world as moral victors over all its pitfalls and attractions. There would seem to be more danger in its attractions than in its pitfalls in these affluent days in which some of the debasing things of this world are finding an entrance into the homes of the saints. How blessed to be marked by the character of the "young men" who overcome them all.

"They go from strength to strength, every one of them in Zion appeareth before God," (v. 7). Here we have depicted the thought of *progress* in view of the *position* we shall ultimately fill in "the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ," (2 Peter 1: 11). The man whose pound gained ten pounds was rewarded by ruling over ten cities, and likewise the man whose pound gained five was to rule over five cities. Progress *here* means greater rewards *there*. Let us then seek to be as those who go "from strength to strength." Just as every faithful Israelite would arrive at mount Zion (the intervention of God in sovereign grace) so will every saint of today arrive in heaven and have part in the display of the kingdom; but while our arrival in heaven is dependent upon sovereign grace, our place in the kingdom is consequent upon the faithfulness of our service for our Lord while in this world (Luke 19: 17). This verse has appearing before God in view more than appearing before men, but Zion certainly has the kingdom in view as in the hands of the Lord, of whom David was but the type.

"O LORD of hosts, hear my prayer; give ear, O God of Jacob, Selah," (v. 8). Two descriptive thoughts of God are in this prayer, "LORD GOD of Hosts" — His *majesty*; "God of Jacob" — His *mercy*. The first would produce from our hearts a note of praise, and the second a note of thanksgiving. If we knew God in His majesty only, how afraid of Him we should be! but the knowledge of His mercy encourages us to go on in His service.

Thus for the second time the little word "Selah" would cause us to pause and consider these things. Whether as fathers having the experiences of the first section of this Psalm, or as young men having the experiences of this further section, may we ever prize the fact that we are in the family of

God, and thus capable of serving Him in this present hostile world.

"Behold O God our shield, and look upon the face of Thine Anointed," (v. 9). In this last section of this instructive Psalm, we come to truth which seems applicable to those who are just at the beginning of their Christian pathway, those whom the apostle John calls "little children." The word "children" occurs about sixteen times in John's three epistles, and twice is rightly translated "little children." These were evidently past the babe stage (a word which John does not use), but had not reached the status of either young men or fathers. They had progressed sufficiently to know the truth and to avoid the lies which would lead to the coming of antichrist, yet were in need of warning and protection because of the many antichrists already present. They could look to God to shield them as He most certainly does all who call upon Him. *Guardianship* and *grace* seem to be the two features here, guarded from the many evil teachings and graced in the Beloved. What a comfort it is for us today to be reminded that we are "accepted in the Beloved," (Eph. 1: 6). How encouraging to know that our God ever views us as in favour in His Anointed.

"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," (v. 10). A young believer once asked a brother "A thousand what"? His reply was, "A thousand of *anything, anywhere else*" — perhaps the best instruction to be derived from this statement. The margin gives "at the threshold" as the meaning of "doorkeeper." There is a joy and satisfaction experienced at the very *entrance* to the circle of divine blessing which could never be found at the *heart* of a world dominated by Satan. Hence these verses would indicate *entrance* into the dwelling where God is served, and *exit* from this world where Satan is served.

"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," (v. 11).

How wonderful to be in the shining of the grace and love of God! As thus cared for, we are ever conscious that His *eye* is upon us and His *hand* over us as those who belong to Him in this world. What a lovely phrase — "grace and glory." Grace which has blessed us in *this world*, and glory to which we are going in *the world to come*. Someone has said of the verse "grace at the beginning of our pathway, glory at the end, and in between 'no good thing will He withhold from them that walk uprightly'." How we need to ponder over this statement — "no *good* thing." We may be able to look back upon our pathway and remember some desires we had which God did not grant. Yet, we are able to thank Him as, realising that had we obtained that object upon which we had set our hearts, it would have done us harm and not good. We have examples of this very thing in the Scriptures. Elijah once asked God to grant that he might die, but instead of this, God took him to heaven in a whirlwind. Let us seek grace to be found walking uprightly, assured that God will give to us all that we need to continue in such a path, withholding in His wisdom everything which would tend to hinder our footsteps.

"O LORD of Hosts, blessed is the man that trusteth in Thee," (v. 12). As we reach the end of this encouraging Psalm, we may happily join with the Psalmist as he speaks of the blessedness of having a place in this wonderful circle of divine favour.

The majesty and supremacy of our God is described in the title, "LORD of Hosts"; let us then be encouraged to trust Him fully both for time and eternity, and be found moving constantly in this present world for His pleasure and glory.