

Our Father's House

Psalm 84:1-12

Halifax: 11 February 2024

Introduction:

Our newer members and visitors may not know about this, but I have long made it a practice to have a Psalm that we sing with our morning sermon series.

- We call it our Psalm of Focus.
- It has been my practice to introduce this Psalm as part of sermon series by preaching from it. It helps us connect songs with what we are studying.

Last week, in our current sermon series from the epistle to the Hebrews, we finished the great faith chapter.

- When we began that chapter, we took Psalm 31 as our Psalm of Focus because it has a lot of say about faith and the outcome of faith.

Next week, Lord willing, we will begin Hebrews 12.

- From this point on, Hebrews will exhort us to advance in the life of faith in Christ.
- He is presented as the marvellous object of our faith in the first 10 chapters of Hebrews, and the exhortation to trust Him is given in the latter part of chapter 10... then in chapter 11, we have the examples of those who believed from the Old Testament... and with chapters 12-13, we are exhorted more specifically about advancing in our faith—that is, making progress in our pursuit of God's kingdom—in coming to Him.

For this reason, I thought Psalm 84 would be an excellent Psalm for our Song of Focus.

- It goes along well with the exhortation to press on in the pursuit of God's kingdom—not because it exhorts us so much (we will let Hebrews do that), but because it is a song that gives the whole church words to express our delight in advancing to our Father's House and our desire to do so.
 - Granted, because of our sin and weakness, we do not always have this delight, but this Psalm expresses the sentiments, motivations, and aspirations we ought to have and do have when we are walking in fellowship with our Saviour.
 - It gives words to those desires and passions to help you form them, to help you express them, and to push you along.
 - I very much hope that it will be a source of great encouragement and help for us to sing this song each week as we come together for worship.

It is a very heart-enriching Psalm.

- As I read it to you now, I encourage you to listen carefully.
- After I read it, I will expound it to you in the hope that God will help you sing it with fuller delight and benefit.
- Here is God's holy and precious Word... Psalm 84:

Psalm 84:1-12: «To the Chief Musician. On an instrument of Gath. A Psalm of the sons of Korah.»
How lovely is Your tabernacle, O LORD of hosts! ² My soul longs, yes, even faints for the courts of the LORD; my heart and my

flesh cry out for the living God. ³ Even the sparrow has found a home, and the swallow a nest for herself, where she may lay her young— even Your altars, O LORD of hosts, My King and my God. ⁴ Blessed are those

who dwell in Your house; they will still be praising You. Selah ⁵ Blessed is the man whose strength is in You, whose heart is set on pilgrimage. ⁶ As they pass through the Valley of Baca, they make it a spring; the rain also covers it with pools. ⁷ They go from strength to strength; *each one* appears before God in Zion.

⁸ O LORD God of hosts, hear my prayer; Give ear, O God of Jacob! Selah ⁹ O God,

behold our shield, and look upon the face of Your anointed. ¹⁰ For a day in Your courts is better than a thousand. I would rather be a doorkeeper in the house of my God than dwell in the tents of wickedness. ¹¹ For the LORD God is a sun and shield; the LORD will give grace and glory; no good *thing* will He withhold from those who walk uprightly. ¹² O LORD of hosts, blessed is the man who trusts in You!

May the Lord richly bless us as we consider these words.

You can see that this Psalm is about going to the house of our heavenly Father.

- If you are a Christian, that is what you have been doing from the day that you were born of God's Spirit.
- From that day, you had a desire to go to be with your heavenly Father, the God who created the heavens and the earth and all that is in them.
 - You understand that you are a sinner and that your sin cut you off from God, but now you are trusting in Jesus Christ who said that He is the way to the Father—that no one can come to the Father except through Him.
- And so you have been going onward and upward by His grace ever since.

As I told you already, this Psalm expresses the sentiments that we have as we go—or at least the sentiments that we ought to have.

- In verses 1-4, we express the longing we have for our Father's house
- In verses 5-9, we express the confidence that we have in the way our Father provided for us to get to His house.
- In verses 10-12, we express the joyous expectation we have of seeing our Father when we arrive.

Let's look at how each of these sentiments is expressed.

I. We sing of the longing we have for our Father's house.

A. We begin the Psalm by exclaiming to Him how much we love His house.

- **V. 1: "How lovely is Your tabernacle, O LORD of hosts!"**
 - The word *tabernacle* means "tent." When this Psalm was written, God's house was represented by a tent because the temple had not been built yet.
 - The words *how lovely* are more accurately translated "how dear," or "how beloved".
 - We are telling Him not only that His house is lovely, but that it dear to us.
- And indeed, His house is very dear to all who have had their eyes opened.
 - The Spirit has shown us how wretched our sin is, and He has shown us what a wretched condition it has brought us into: we have been cut off from the Father.
 - But we have also seen His grace that calls us to return to Him by Christ so that we can be restored and so that we can live with the Father in His house.

B. In the next verse, we tell Him how much we want to be there and to see Him!

- **V. 2: My soul longs, yes, even faints for the courts of the LORD; my heart and my flesh cry out for the living God.**
 - This is a very strong expression—our soul is pining for Him and His house.
 - We are full of this desire—it has taken us over.
 - This is what the Spirit does when we are truly converted.
- There is no more glorious place to be than God’s house in all the universe.
 - It is a place where there is no sin, where God is perfectly loved and served, where there is pure and holy love, where we have peace and fulfilment.
 - It is a house where we have pleasures forevermore—where guilt and coming short are a thing of the past.
 - It is a house where sickness and suffering are abolished—and where we truly love and are loved. There is no place like it.

C. We tell Him how we have observed what a welcoming place His house is.

- **V. 3: Even the sparrow has found a home, and the swallow a nest for herself, where she may lay her young— even Your altars, O LORD of hosts, my King and my God.**
 - In the Bible, the sparrow is used to refer to the lowly, the insignificant.
 - Jesus once said, Mt 10:29: **Are not two sparrows sold for a copper coin? And not one of them falls to the ground apart from your Father’s will.**
 - Our Father is the Sovereign Lord of all, but He welcomes the lowly to His house.
 - He has even provided altars there where sacrifices are made for our acceptance!
 - He has made Himself Father to the lowly and to the unworthy.
 - See how the sparrow dwells there with here little ones!
 - Our Father warmly welcomes us. He sings for joy that we have come!
 - **Zep 3:17: The LORD your God in your midst, the Mighty One, will save; He will rejoice over you with gladness, He will quiet you with His love, He will rejoice over you with singing.**

D. In verse 4, we declare what a blessing it is for anyone to dwell in this house!

- We say: **Blessed are those who dwell in Your house; they will still be praising You.**
 - How we yearn to be with them!
 - How dear is this house to us!
 - How we long to be there.

➤ And by His grace, we can go there because He has prepared the way to get there.

- He has made a highway for us to get to Him.
- That is the second thing we sing about in this song.

II. We sing of the confidence we have in the way the Father has provided for us to get to His house.

A. We go in His strength.

- **V. 5: Blessed is the man whose strength is in You, whose heart is set on pilgrimage.**
 - Christ, our beloved Savior, is the Captain of our salvation...
 - We learned in Hebrews 2:10 what that means.

- As our captain, He goes ahead of us, carving out the way that was blocked for us because of our sin and condemnation.
- He was made what we need by suffering. By His suffering and death, He has broken through the barrier that separated us from God and we go after Him.
- But that is not all.
 - He also goes with us to strengthen us along the way.
 - We go, leaning upon Him for our strength and support.
 - He upholds us by His word and Spirit, by His sacrament and by His intercession.
 - We could not go a single step without His enabling grace.
 - He is even responsible for baptising us with the Spirit so as to renew our hearts that were once opposed to God.
 - Now our heart is set on pilgrimage—
 - The word translated *pilgrimage* actually refers to a highway—
 - Christ Himself is the highway that God made to bring us out the wilderness of sin and death that we might come to Him.
 - The highway is Christ, and the Spirit turns our hearts to this highway.
 - How does the Spirit do that?
 - He opens our eyes to see the truth about God and Christ, about our sin and our condemnation to hell.
 - And He opens our eyes and turns our hearts to see the glory and beauty of our heavenly Father and to want Him.
 - He opens our eyes and turns our hearts to see Christ and His saving work—and then our hearts are set on Christ as God’s highway to Himself.
 - Our hearts are fixed and sustained by His grace.
- But that does not mean that it is easy.
 - It is His plan for us to go through hard things to strengthen us and our love.
 - We must rely on Him constantly to go on, and we must grow.
- B. We sing of how the valley of weeping becomes, by His grace, the place of nourishment, encouragement, and renewal.
 - V. 6 & 7 say: ***As they pass through the Valley of Baca, they make it a spring; the rain also covers it with pools. 7 They go from strength to strength; Each one appears before God in Zion.***
 1. The picture is of us heading out to God’s house with joy and coming to this Valley of Baca, which is the Valley of Weeping.
 - The weeping can be caused by disappointment—with loved ones that have let us down or betrayed us; with our own failings, with misplaced expectations.
 - It can be caused by hardships, injury, sickness, persecution, poverty, bereavement, barrenness, the loss of a child or a spouse.
 2. When we go through the valley leaning on Christ our beloved, when we go in His strength, it becomes of place of fruitfulness.
 - He actually makes us stronger through the hardships—more committed to the way, more delighted with our God, more joyful in our communion with Him.

- The trials force us not only to draw our strength from His arm, but also to take a fresh look at the beauty of our God so that we will be encouraged to go on.
 - An unregenerate person will be hardened because they are not with Christ.
 - But the believer will lean more heavily and gladly upon Him and will go from strength to strength all the way to Zion.
- When the way is hard, it makes our desire to come to our Father's house even stronger.
- The Valley of Baca threatened to stop us, but instead God used it to strengthen our longing for His house all the more. False sons are often turned away here.
- C. See how we (whose hearts are set on Christ as God's way) cry out to God that He would receive our prayers and that He would regard the Saviour that He has provided for us!
1. In verse 8 we say: **O LORD God of hosts, hear my prayer; give ear, O God of Jacob!**
 - He has provided access to Himself in prayer. Because of Christ and His merit, we can expect to be heard.
 - Did Jesus not tell us to ask the Father what we will in His name and it would be done for us?
 - The sovereign LORD, the LORD of Hosts, promises to hear us and to act for us when our prayer is to come to Him.
 - If you want something else, He may or may not grant it, but when you want to go on to your Father's house, and when you come in the way that He has appointed (Christ), He will answer your prayer.
 2. In verse 9, we ask Him to look at the shield He gave us and the one He provided to represent us—the anointed one—that is, the Messiah, or the Christ.
 - It says: **O God, behold our shield, and look upon the face of Your anointed.**
 - Lord, do not look at our merit—look upon the face our your anointed.
 - He came to shield us from your wrath—to cover our sin.
 - He came to be our priest and to offer Himself as a sacrifice.
 - He came to be our priest and intercede for us.
 - See His face, see His beauty, see His perfection, see His tears for our sin, see His suffering, see His merit.
 - He is the way you provided and we are looking to Him.

TRANS> But now we come to the best part of all of which we sing!

III. The joyous expectation we have of seeing our Father when we arrive.

- Indeed, *He* is what makes His house so attractive.
 - It is that *He* is there! Ezekiel ends his book with these words about God's house: **Ezek 38:44: The LORD is there!** *He* is what heaven is about.
- Heaven is often portrayed falsely—as just a better place that is never defined.
 - A person without Christ dies and it is said that they went to a better place.
 - That is a lie! They went to hell for their sins.
 - In the Bible, heaven is going to God!
- In the world, heaven is portrayed as an escape for people from things they don't like.

- But unless it is holiness and separation from the true and living God that they don't like, heaven is not that at all.
 - It is the place where we are delivered from wickedness and brought to our holy Father.
 - This is what we sing about in verses 10 & 11.
- A. In verse 10, we sing of how the very courts of His house are a thousand times better than admittance to any other house.
- It says: **For a day in Your courts is better than a thousand. I would rather be a doorkeeper in the house of my God Than dwell in the tents of wickedness.**
 - You see why I said a thousand times better.
 - One day is better than a thousand anywhere else.
 - *Doorkeeper* is an over-translation in the NKJV.
 - The word simply means to be near the door. It is saying that to be near the door to His house is better than to be inside anywhere else.
 - The tents of wickedness promise you bliss and pleasure—and there are temporary pleasures, but they have no depth... no lasting goodness...
 - They are sweet to the taste but bitter to the stomach.
 - They bring sorrow and regret, ruin and despair. Think of Proverbs and the how the seductress is described.
 - All this reminds me of the Syro-phoenician woman who came to Jesus and was rejected by Him at first because she was not from Israel.
 - Jesus told her that it was not appropriate to take the children's bread—the salvation He brought to Israel—and give it to the dogs (people from other nations).
 - She replied that even the crumbs that fall from the children's table were plenty for her!
 - She would prefer a crumb from the table in His house to a feast in the house of wickedness.
 - Just as we sing here that we'd prefer to be even outside the door to His house than admitted to the tents of wickedness!
- But the climax is in verse 11.
- B. The delight we have in God's house is in God Himself.
- Our heavenly Father is the one who makes the house such a wonderful place.
 - It has the finest furnishings, the most beautiful order, the most gracious servants—but the glory of the house is our Father!
1. **V. 11: For the LORD God is the Sun and Shield.**
- We call Him the *Sun* because He is radiant.
 - All His creatures surround Him for worship and praise.
 - He is majestic and brilliant... it is impossible to tire of Him... there are marvellous depths of light to discover for all eternity.
 - We call Him our shield because with Him we are perfectly safe.
 - He is majestic and invincible—invincible majesty!

- No devil, no storm, no pestilence, no famine—nothing at all can arm us in His house.
2. Our Father is also supremely generous.
- We sing that: **He will give grace and glory.**
 - *Grace* speaks of His favour and blessing.
 - By His grace we are made all that He created us to be.
 - One who is beautiful, one who worships beautifully, who serves others beautifully, who welcomes others and is a delight to them.
 - That is what His grace does for us.
 - And *glory*. *Glory* is the honour that we have when His grace has done the work I just described.
 - Our Father’s glory is seen upon us—we become that which is admired—that which is glorious.
 - O, we are so far from this now! But one day in His courts is better than a thousand elsewhere!
 - He gives grace and glory to His children!
3. We sing on... “**No good thing will He withhold from those who walk uprightly.**”
- Once His grace has done its work so that we are upright, we will see His unbounded generosity.
 - It is not merely that we will have no more suffering and sorrow, nor that we will have an abundance of good things.
 - It is something far better.
 - *No good thing will He withhold from us!*
 - When we are made upright, it will not ruin us as it would now to have the abundance of all that divine kindness can bestow.
 - He is a Father who lavishes His children with gifts and pleasures forevermore.

Conclusion: We conclude our song of God’s house with these words:

- Vs. 12: **O LORD of hosts, blessed is the man who trusts in You!**
- The one who is blessed is the one who has faith—the one who trusts in our Father.
 - By faith, we believe that God is and that He is a rewarder of them that diligently seek Him.
 - And so we trust in Jesus Christ who died to save us that He might bring us to the Father—
 - We look to Him as the way to our Father and to His blessing.
 - We see Him who is invisible and we rejoice in the inheritance that He has promised us—to dwell in His house forever.
- **O LORD of hosts, blessed in the man who trusts in You!**
 - Are you trusting in Him and in His Christ?
 - Are you longing to go to His house?
 - Are you trusting in the way that He has provided to get there?
 - Are you rejoicing in the hope of dwelling with Him in glory?

- Hebrews 12 and 13 exhort us to go all the way with Christ.