

HOW MUCH DO YOU DESIRE GOD?
(SUNDAY, JULY 26, 2020)

Scripture reading – 2 Corinthians 3:7-18; Ps. 84

INTRODUCTION

According to Wolfram Alpha, there are 300 billion trillion stars.

Astronomers estimate there are at least 100 billion galaxies, though some say that number should be at least 2 trillion.¹

I have mentioned this before, but Scripture gives an amazing testimony to the vast number of stars.

You can count about 3,000 stars with the unaided eye if you happen to be in a very dark place.

What in Scripture is compared to the number of the stars? One comparison is the sand on the seashore.

Some scientists estimate that the number of stars and the grains of sand to be equal in number.

It is not that they have to be exactly the same, but clearly the Holy Spirit communicated early in Scripture that there were many, many more stars than what you can see.

With David we say, what is man that thou are mindful of him?

Even though individually we are so entirely insignificant in terms of the vastness of the world and universe, we have the blessing of worshipping the one and only true God – Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

Isn't it so amazing that God takes notice of us?

Psalm 84 is in the third book of the Psalms.

Book 3 (Psalms 73-89) is “darker” in the themes it contains.

Psalm 84 is what we might call a “happier” Psalm.

We, of course, need all the Psalms that God has given to us.

¹ I found these widely ranging estimates with a Google search.

It would be foolish to ignore any of them.

This Psalm, though full of joy and blessing, does bring a rebuke and encouragement.

- It rebukes us for our shallow desires and our weakness often in truly seeking after God.
- It encourages by reminding you of the graciousness of our God and the blessings He offers to those who will seek after Him.
- Psalm 84 asks you, what do you truly desire?

Henry Scrougal, a Scottish Puritan preacher, wrote:

The soul is measured by its flights,
Some low and others high,
The heart is known by its delights,
And pleasures never lie.²

Do you truly with the words of this Psalm cry out for the living God?

What sacrifices do we ever make so that we can worship Him and enjoy His presence?

God offers the greatest blessings. May you never be satisfied apart from Him.

We will look at this Psalm in three parts:

Verses 1-4; verses 5-9; and verses 10-12

1. THE BLESSING OF WORSHIP, VV. 1-4

The **Sons of Korah** are the authors of 11 of the Psalms.

Psalms 87 and 88 are their last works.

Kohath was the second son of Levi and founder of one of the 3 Levite families.

² John Piper, *The Pleasures of God*, 16. Scrougal's famous book was *The Life of God in the Soul of Man*.

Korah was a grandson of Kohath and the ancestor of musicians and others who served the temple.

In 1 Chronicles 9, we read of Shallum of the family of Korah.

He and his brethren were in charge of the work of the service. They were the **gatekeepers** of the tabernacle.

- James Boice calls this Psalm, the **Psalm of the Janitors**.

Some of the sons of Korah had what some might call a lowly task, but it was something they took delight in doing as they served at the tabernacle and temple in a variety of ways.

- What stands out so powerfully is that they did not grow tired of their service at the temple.
- The author of this Psalm and the others who were faithful with him found serving God at the temple **the greatest joy and blessing** that God could give them.

There was a sacrifice in their work.

According to 1 Chron. 9:27 we read,

1 Chron. 9:27 *And they lodged all around the house of God because they had the responsibility, and they were in charge of opening it every morning.*

What is described here is the duty of working the midnight shift – spending the night in their posts all around the temple.³

- This duty was a delight because they found the place where God manifested His special presence lovely.

There is no doubt that Solomon’s temple was probably one of the most beautiful buildings ever constructed.

There is natural beauty in Jerusalem; the nearby Mount of Olives and other scenery.

- But this is not why the author of this Psalm writes.

The writer delights in God and His presence.

³ NET Translation

This is what we see powerfully illustrated in verse 2.

- Verse 2 uses two similar verbs to express the intensity of the desire to be at the temple and in a special way to delight in God's presence made known there.

Desire is one of the strongest forces in the soul.

- If you **desire** something, often you will do whatever it takes to get it or accomplish your desire.
- When there is something you really want to buy, it can be hard to think of anything else.

Here we see the **greatest expression of desire** – desire for God's presence and relationship with the living God along with joy.

The verb **cry out** could be translated as sing for joy.

The language of these opening verses should remind you of another Psalm written by the sons of Korah – Psalm 42.

Psa. 42:1 As the deer pants for the water brooks, So pants my soul for You, O God.
2 My soul thirsts for God, for the living God. When shall I come and appear before God?

Psalms like this and others are some of the most convicting Psalms.

Is there anything similar in your own heart?

We sometimes blame **busyness** on the weak state of many Christians.

- And it may be the case we are too busy with distractions and the like.

But perhaps a deeper root is our lack of desire for God.

- Rather than seek our greatest satisfaction in God alone we have become satisfied with much less.
- We have eaten the pile of Twinkies rather than the gourmet, five-star meal.

Verse 3 continues by discussing the sparrows and swallows who have found a home and have made their nests near the temple courts.

- What is the point of such imagery?
- In part we have to say that the author wrote about his own personal experiences of birds that made their homes near the temple.
- Boice mentions how sparrows were birds almost worthless in value.
- In the words of Jesus, we learn that two sparrows were sold for just a farthing or a penny, a small Roman copper coin.

Swallows can be pictures of restlessness. Swallows are birds always on the move until the time comes to mate, build a nest, and raise young.

Perhaps the point is then that these birds representing worthlessness and restlessness find a place to rest in God's presence.

How much more does God offer blessing to those who seek Him?

Blessed are those who **dwell** in God's house and praise you continually.

- David's desire as expressed in Psalm 23 and also 27 was to **dwell in the house of the LORD** all the days of his life.

There is no central and single place of worship today where **God manifests in a special way His presence**.

Wherever God's people are faithfully gathered in truth and through the power of the Holy Spirit, God's presence is known. (Known by faith, truth, not by feeling.)

There is then at least a twofold application in these opening verses.

- How much do we desire to be gathered for corporate worship?
- How much do you desire also to seek the presence of God individually?

What is so wonderful about the message of this Psalm is that God proclaims a blessing for those who truly do seek Him.

- The God who is worth all our desire and seeking also is a God who will be found by those who seek after Him.

Heb. 10:22 let us **draw near** with a true heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water.

2. BLESSED ARE THOSE WHO JOURNEY TO ZION, VV. 5-9

Most in Israel did not have the privilege of living close to the temple.

This Psalm also speaks in its original context to those who perhaps only came for the three required feasts.

Was there only a blessing for those who served directly at the tabernacle or temple? No.

- There is a blessing for those who strength is also in the LORD.
- They are further described as having a highway in their hearts, that is they desire and look forward to traveling to Jerusalem.

Verse 6 describes briefly the travels of these pilgrims.

- It is not clear entirely what the Valley of Baca may mean.
- There is a similar word that means to weep, so that is a possibility of what is being described here.

Israel is not a large country, but if you had to walk 150 miles or so to Jerusalem, that would be quite an undertaking.

- Can you imagine taking your children and the needed supplies on such a trip? We have the simple life in many ways.

Life on a pilgrimage is rarely easy, but verse 6 describes that those who have the right desires actually find blessing in the midst of tears or dry valleys.

- One translation suggests that it is God who turns the Valley of Baca into a spring.

When your heart is directed to truly seeking the LORD, then even challenges are overcome and refreshment is found.

2Cor. 4:16 Therefore we do not lose heart. Even though our outward man is perishing, yet the inward *man* is being renewed day by day. **17** For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, is working for us a far more exceeding *and* eternal weight of glory,

I don't think Paul was quoting or alluding to this Psalm, but verse 7 has a similar expression – from strength to strength.

- This is an important testimony.
- **God will give you the strength to do what He calls you to do.**

The final two verses of this section end with a prayer to God for protection and for the anointed king.

- It may make sense to see the prayer is directed to God in light of the dangers of making the journey to Jerusalem, but this is not stated explicitly in the Psalm.

Three times in this Psalm there is reference to the LORD of hosts, LORD Sabaoth, the LORD of armies.

- In verse 8 God is referred to as the God of Jacob – the God who keeps His covenant and the God who directed Jacob throughout his many journeys.

In verse 9 the prayer is focused on God protecting the anointed king, the Messiah.

- The king not only played an important role in protecting the people and pilgrims.
- The king was also to represent Israel before God.

- The king was especially to set the example for Israel to follow, something very few kings faithfully fulfilled.⁴

Biblically there is a clear division between the role of the king and the role of the priest.

Biblically there is also a clear unity as both king and priest are called to witness to God's truth and call the people to faithful worship.

5 Blessed is the man whose strength is in You, Whose heart is set on pilgrimage.

We know we cannot spend all our days like monks in contemplation and prayer.

The goal is not to use a stopwatch and measure how much time we spend in prayer, praise, and the reading of God's Word.

But there should be in your heart a desire to bring praise to the Lord.

Your greatest delight should be His truth and the fellowship that we have with Him.

3. BLESSED ARE THOSE WHO TRUST IN THE LORD, VV. 10-12

One of my favorite verses is 1 Chronicles 26:18.

1 Chron. 26:18 *At Parbar westward, four at the causeway, and two at Parbar. (KJV)*

I like this verse because it shows how important it is to seek the context of a verse and not just pull it out and try to find its meaning.

1 Chron. 26:18 is actually related to this passage.

- What 1 Chron. 26 describes is the duty of the gatekeepers which included those of the line of Korah.
- The word Parbar is a Hebrew word which other versions translate as colonnade.
- It is a difficult word, but it has to do with either a room or some area connected with the larger temple complex.

⁴ ESV Study Bible, s.v. Psalm 84:9.

Temple guards were established in this area called the Parbar or western colonnade – four on the road leading to it and two at the colonnade itself.

This might have been viewed as a rather lowly job, but not to God or to the writer of this Psalm.

A day spent in the vicinity of the temple is better than a thousand days spent anywhere else.

Better to have a lowly job in serving God than to live in ease and in tents of wickedness.

Many people tend to think that joy is the result of your dreams being fulfilled.

But this Psalm directs us that **true joy** is found when you are fully trusting God and serving where He places you.

O LORD of Hosts, blessed is the man who trusts in You!

What the world might call lowly or a worthless is identified as true joy.

Look at the wonderful promise given in verse 11.

Who else but God can promise that what you need He will supply?

Charles Spurgeon commented:

Grace makes us walk uprightly and this secures every covenant blessing to us. What a wide promise! Some apparent good may be withheld, but no real good, no, not one. "All things are yours, and ye are Christ's, and Christ is God's." God has all good, there is no good apart from him, and there is no good which he either needs to keep back or will on any account refuse us, if we are but ready to receive it.

God offers the greatest blessings. May you never be satisfied apart from Him.

Points of Application:

1. There is a false, man-centered idea of time spent in prayer and reading God's Word.

2. We do need to be aware of lack of spiritual discipline and focus
3. We pray for God's work in our own hearts and in our family
4. How can we be more focused in praise and prayer?
5. What preparations do you make for our Sunday gatherings?

Closing Hymn: 239

BENEDICTION - EPHESIANS 3:20-21

Now to Him who is able to do exceedingly abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that works in us, to Him *be* glory in the church by Christ Jesus to all generations, forever and ever. Amen.