

True Happiness
Dr. Wayne Mack
July 6, 2014

I mentioned that Carol and I are celebrating our 57th wedding anniversary this very day, and as we celebrate that 57th wedding anniversary, I was reminded of Proverbs 31 which describes for us God's kind of wife, and God's kind of mother. Then, as the writer brings this chapter to a conclusion, in fact the whole book of Proverbs to a conclusion, he says in reference to this wife or mother, her children rise up and bless her. Her husband also, and he praises her saying, "Many daughters have done nobly, but you excel them all. Charm is deceitful, and beauty is vain, but a woman who fears the Lord, she shall be praised. Give her the product of her hands, and let her works praise her in the gates." And I want to do that this morning for my dear wife.

She is a living example of Proverbs 31, and it says that her husband praises her, and he says, "Charm is deceitful, and beauty is vain, but a woman who fears the Lord, she shall be praised." I want to thank God for my wife, for the wife that God has given to me, and I can say that charm is deceitful, while she's charming, she's not deceitful. She's beautiful and that's not in vain because her beauty is not just an outward beauty, but an inward beauty as well. It says that a woman who fears the Lord, she shall be praised, and so I want to praise God for my dear wife, and her faithfulness over 57 years of ministry, working with me as a pastor's wife for many years, and then shifting with me to the training of pastors, and missionaries, and God's people in the state of Pennsylvania, and then in Louisiana, and then in California. I kind of pulled her to different places—Pennsylvania, Louisiana, California, and then at the end of 2005, we moved halfway around the world to South Africa. I thank God for her faithfulness.

It was about 7 years ago, a little bit more than that, that we met some people from Providence Church, and we didn't meet them here in Duluth, or Lawrenceville, Georgia, but we met them in South Africa, and that was of course Connie and John, and Jack and Barbara Enter, and we got to know them at that particular time, and we were much encouraged by them. Since that time we of course have come back to the United States in the summertime, and we have been privileged to spend a considerable amount of time with John and Connie Blackburn, and then with the Enters, and then of course we've gotten to know Pastor Ty quite well during that time. So I want to thank God for the ministry of Providence Church to us, through the entire church, but especially through John and Connie, and Jack and Barbara, who have been of such great help to us. So it's good to be with you. Thank God for

the opportunity we've had, and we look forward preaching the word today, and then again on Saturday, and being with you on Sunday as well for the Missionary Conference.

Well I want you to turn with me in your Bibles to Psalm 84. As we look at Psalm 84, which will be the main passage we'll be looking at today, I want you to listen for a little phrase that is repeated on at least three occasions in this chapter. One is in Verse 4, another is in Verse 5, and the same phrase is used again in Verse 12. So let me read that for you, and then we'll, with God's help, take this passage apart.

Psalm 84:1-12

- 1 *How lovely are Your dwelling places,
O LORD of hosts!***

- 2 *My soul longed and even yearned for the courts of the LORD;
My heart and my flesh sing for joy to the living God.***

- 3 *The bird also has found a house,
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 *How blessed are those who dwell in Your house!
They are ever praising You. Selah.***

- 5 *How blessed is the man whose strength is in You,
In whose heart are the highways to Zion!***

- 6 *Passing through the valley of Baca they make it a spring;
The early rain also covers it with blessings.***

- 7 *They go from strength to strength,
Every one of them appears before God in Zion.***

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

- 9 *Behold our shield, O God,
And look upon the face of Your anointed.***

10 *For a day in Your courts is better than a thousand outside.
I would rather stand at the threshold of the house of my God
Than dwell in the tents of wickedness.*

11 *For the LORD God is a sun and shield;
The LORD gives grace and glory;
No good thing does He withhold from those who walk uprightly.*

12 *O LORD of hosts,
How blessed is the man who trusts in You!*

Our Father, we come to You realizing that it's Your word that we are studying. You've given us the word, and You've given us the word to teach us, to reprove us, to correct us, and to train us in righteousness so that we might become thoroughly equipped unto every good work. Lord, You're the one who gave us the word, You're the one who understands perfectly what You intended to convey through Your word. You're the one who can take Your word and plant it deep into our hearts. We pray today, Lord, that You would give us hearts that are not like the wayside soil of Mark 4, nor like the thorny soil, nor like the soil that has an under laying of rock. But you will make our hearts as good soil, so that Your word might fall into our hearts, and that it might bear fruit. As You said, some a hundredfold, sixtyfold, some thirtyfold, but never nonetheless Your word is intended to bear fruit. And so we pray that You would use the word today, and help me to be able to communicate clearly what Your word says. In Christ's name we pray, Amen.

Well before I read this passage, I asked you to pay attention, and look for a little phrase that is repeated at least three times in this psalm. One of those times is Verse 4, another is in Verse 5, another is in Verse 12. Now what these verses say is, "How blessed are those who dwell in Your house, how blessed is the man whose strength is in You, and how blessed is the man who trusts in You." The little phrase I wanted you to notice is the word '*how blessed*'. This is a psalm about being blessed. Now the word which is translated '*blessed*' in this psalm is the word '*esher*', that's the Hebrew word, and it is used some 45 times in the Bible. Now the Hebrew word translated '*blessed*', '*esher*', literally means '*to be happy*', or it means '*to be fortunate*'. The Hebrew dictionary defines the word '*esher*' this way, it says basically this word connotes the state of prosperity or happiness that comes when a superior bestows his favor, or blessing on someone. So this word conveys the idea of happiness. It conveys the idea of satisfaction or a contentment of being favored. It conveys the idea of someone who has been given unusual privileges.

Now from this we may draw the conclusion that the phrase *'how blessed'* might be translated how happy is the person, how happy is he, how fortunate is this person. So what we have in Psalm 84 is God showing us the secret of true happiness. He is telling us something of the privileges that we, as believers, have in our relationship with Him that ought to cause us to be happy. It ought to cause us to be contented. It ought to cause us to be satisfied. What He is saying is, "How happy, or contented, or satisfied is this person." So in this psalm, God is telling us that we as believers, New Testament terminology, we as Christians, ought to be a happy people. As we study this psalm, I believe we can see three things about the happiness that we as believers can experience. Today I want to focus our attention on these three things. First of all, I want you to notice that this psalm describes a quality of joy that God wants believers to have, and that is suggested by what He says in Verse 2. He says the kind of joy that we as believers should have is the kind of joy that makes us sing. It says, "How blessed are those who dwell in Your house, they are ever singing to You." That is in Verse 2, actually,

Psalm 84:2 ~ My heart and my flesh sing for joy to the living God.

I'm so happy that I sing *...for joy to the living God.*

Then in Verse 4, the second part, the joy which believers should have is the joy that causes us to be ever-praising God. It just wells up within us, and we have to praise God. Then in Verse 7, he says that this joy that we as believers have is the kind of joy that is productive. It makes us spiritually stronger.

Psalm 84:7

***They go from strength to strength,
Every one of them appears before God in Zion.***

And then Verse 10, the psalmist tells us, writing of course by inspiration of the Holy Spirit, he says that this joy is so great that it is superior to any joy that is found in the world. He said, "I'd rather be a doorkeeper in the house of God, in the presence of God, than to dwell in the tents of wickedness." So the joy that we as believers have, we have every right to have that kind of joy, according to this psalm, is a joy that is of a superior quality. But I want you to move on in looking at this psalm, and notice what it has to say about what isn't the source, or basis for the believer's joy. He describes in this psalm, the false basis for joy, and that is suggested by what Verse 5a doesn't say. The psalmist said, "How blessed is the man whose strength is in You." He doesn't say, "How blessed is the man whose

strength is in himself.” The verse doesn’t say that the basis of happiness comes from the fact that we have a good self-image. The basis of our joy doesn’t come from having a lot of self-confidence. What the psalmist doesn’t say, reminds us of something that Jeremiah wrote, in Jeremiah 17:5-8. Jeremiah says:

Jeremiah 17:5-8

- 5** ***Thus says the LORD,
“Cursed is the man who trusts in mankind
And makes flesh his strength,
And whose heart turns away from the LORD.***
- 6** ***“For he will be like a bush in the desert
And will not see when prosperity comes,
But will live in stony wastes in the wilderness,
A land of salt without inhabitant.***
- 7** ***“Blessed is the man who trusts in the LORD
And whose trust is the LORD.***
- 8** ***“For he will be like a tree planted by the water,
That extends its roots by a stream
And will not fear when the heat comes;
But its leaves will be green,
And it will not be anxious in a year of drought
Nor cease to yield fruit.***

Now what Jeremiah is saying is that the person who puts his confidence in himself, he says that man is cursed, not that that man is blessed. The world may say that blessing comes from having a lot of self-confidence, from having a good self-image, but this text says that cursed is that man who is trusting in himself. What the psalmist doesn’t say about the basis of true happiness reminds us of the warning of Jeremiah in Chapter 9, Verses 23-24, where the Bible says, God speaking:

Jeremiah 9:23-24 ~ Thus says the LORD, “Let not a wise man boast of his wisdom, and let not the mighty man boast of his might, let not a rich man boast of his riches; 24 but let him who boasts boast of this, that he understands and knows Me, that I am the LORD who exercises

lovingkindness, justice and righteousness on earth; for I delight in these things,” declares the LORD.

Now what God is doing in Jeremiah 9:23-24 is describing for us one of the things that people base their joy on, or their happiness on. Some people boast in their wisdom, or they boast in their college degrees, they boast in how well they've done in school, and all that they know. But God says, ***“Let not a wise man boast of his wisdom, and let not the mighty man boast of his might, let not a rich man boast of his riches; 24 but let him who boasts boast of this, that he understands and knows Me, that I am the LORD who exercises lovingkindness, justice and righteousness on earth; for I delight in these things,” declares the LORD.*** That's not where he should put his emphasis.” It says, ***...let not the mighty man boast of his might...*** There are some people who boast in their physical ability, in their athletic ability, in the strength that they have, and they get their happiness from knowing that they do well in sports, or they are stronger than someone else.

Then it also says, “Don't let a man boast in his riches.” Now that is another thing that many people find their joy in. “I have money in the bank. I have a good job which pays me a lot of money. I can buy what I want to buy. I can go where I want to go,” and so they boast in their riches, and that is what they are depending on for their joy. But Jeremiah writing, by the inspiration of the Holy Spirit says, “Don't boast in those things.” In fact it says the man who trusts in these things is cursed!

Then in Verse 6 of Jeremiah 17, he goes on to explain how the person who trusts in himself is cursed. He says that this person is like a bush in the desert. This person will not be prosperous. This person will live in stony waste. So the verse uses a number of figures of speech to describe a lack of success. It indicates that the person who tries to find happiness in himself, through his own abilities, through his own endeavors, through his own efforts, may seem to succeed for a while, but ultimately he will not succeed in finding true and lasting happiness. Over the years I've been involved in counseling now for more than 40 years. I've counseled with hundreds of people, probably thousands of people, and I've counseled with many people whose presentation problem when they come for counseling is that they were unhappy because they lacked self-confidence. These people blame their lack of happiness on the fact that they weren't as intelligent, or as gifted, or as witty, or as educated, or as beautiful, or handsome as some other people. So they came for counseling saying, “If only I had the beauty that someone else has.” “If only I had the wisdom that somebody else has.” “If only I had the education that someone else had.” “If only I had the personality that someone else had, I would be happy.” But God says, “No, cursed is the man who trusts in himself.”

Then, a second thing that Psalm 84 doesn't say, it doesn't say how blessed, or happy, or fortunate is the person who finds his strength in other people. This fact takes us back again to Jeremiah 17:5 where the Bible not only says that a person is cursed if he trusts or depends upon himself, but Jeremiah 17 also warns us against putting our confidence in other people, which is a warning against trying to get our strength from other people. It says cursed is the man who makes the arm of flesh his strength. Isaiah 2:22 says he's trusting in man, whose breath is in his nostrils, for of what account is he? Psalm 20:7 says:

Psalm 20:7 ~ Some boast in chariots and some in horses, But we will boast in the name of the LORD, our God.

There are many people today who are putting their confidence on others to make them happy. For example, I remember counseling with a miserable young lady who thought that the reason for her unhappiness was due to the fact that she wasn't married. She thought if only someone would desire her, if only someone would marry her, she would be happy. I warned her, she didn't listen, she didn't agree, she went away thinking, "If someone would only want me, I would be happy." Well a young man did come along, and they got married, and about a year later they were back in my counseling room because she had found out that happiness doesn't come ultimately from what other people think about you, or how other people regard you. Now that young lady was not unique. There are thousands of unhappy people who think that their unhappiness is due to the fact that other people don't appreciate them, other people don't help them, or other people don't appreciate them.

For example, when Midge came for counseling, she was a miserable 23-year-old woman. She blamed her misery on two things. First, she blamed her misery on her own inadequacies. She told her counselor that her misery was due to the fact that she was a nothing. She said that she was miserable because she was inferior to other people. Then second, she blamed her unhappiness on the fact that in her words, "No one notices me. No one likes me. No one cares about me. No one encourages me. No one affirms me." She thought that her unhappiness was due to the fact that others were not giving her the support she needed. Her idea was that, "If only others would affirm me. If only others would like me. If only others would respect me. If only others would pay attention to me, I would be happy." Now it's true that we ought to be encouraging one another. We ought to be affirming one another. We ought to be caring for one another. After all, what we have in the Bible is more than 50 one-anothering statements.

For example 1 Thessalonians 4:16 says we are to comfort one another, and in 1 Thessalonians 5:11 the Bible says we are to encourage one another. We are to instruct one another. Romans 12:10 says that when it comes to this matter of honor, we should prefer that others would be honored rather than ourselves. In Galatians 6:2, the Bible says we are to bear one another's burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ. And in 1 Corinthians 12:26, the Bible says if one Christian is honored we ought to rejoice with that person who is rejoicing. If one person is exalted or hurt in some way, we ought to suffer with that person. So the Bible makes it clear that we as God's people ought to be caring for one another, taking care of one another, affirming one another, but the Bible also makes it clear that the person who depends on others for happiness will always be disappointed. The Bible says cursed is the man who makes the arm of flesh his strength. In Psalm 84, when God tells us about the source of true happiness, He doesn't say that the source or basis of true happiness is the affirmation of other people.

Now the third thing that I want you to notice in this psalm, Psalm 84, in terms of what the basis of true happiness isn't, and that is suggested by Verse 6, which says:

***Psalm 84:6 ~ Passing through the valley of Baca they make it a spring;
The early rain also covers it with blessings.***

Now the margin of my Bible translates the word 'Baca' as 'weeping', and what it is saying is that passing through the valley of weeping they make that very valley of suffering, or weeping, a spring. Spurgeon says that what the psalmist is referring to as the valley of Baca, which was described in Judges 2:1-5, now according to Judges 2, the valley of Baca was a place where the angel of the Lord rebuked and chastised the Israelites for their disobedience. The Bible says that when they were chastised by the Lord, the people lifted up their voices and wept. So here in Psalm 84, the psalmist is telling us a couple of things. One he is telling us that when believers disobey God, God will discipline them. Whom the Lord loves, He chastens, and He scourges every son whom He receives.

The second thing that we're told by this reference to the valley of Baca is that ultimately the happiness of believers is not dependent upon continuously pleasant circumstances. It is telling us that the blessedness of Christians is not dependent on having a life where we never experience stormy times. It is not having a life where we never have anything but sunny days. We will sometimes go through the valley of Baca. We will sometimes go through the valley of weeping, but even in the midst of the valley of weeping, we are a blessed person.

Now, previously I said that some people base their happiness on their own self-esteem, or they base their happiness on the respect, or affirmation, or admiration of other people. If that is true, and it is true, that is what some people do base their happiness on, and as long as they have those things, they are at least temporarily happy. But when they lose those things, they're in despair. Well, it's also true that some people want to base their happiness on their pleasant circumstances.

Recently I read the story of Michael Jordan and I'm sure all of you know who Michael Jordan was and is. It's reputed that he was the greatest basketball player who ever played the game of basketball, and in his career, he won the Most Valuable Player award more than any other player has ever won that award. He scored more points than any other player during his era of playing ever scored. His team the Chicago Bulls won the championship more years in a row than any other professional basketball team. Well, a few years ago Michael Jordan retired, and this article that I read went on to say that after his retirement, Michael Jordan tried to find satisfaction in many ways. He, for example, bought a professional basketball team. He got involved in many businesses. The Nike shoe company named gym shoes after him—Air Jordan—and the article went on to say that when Michael Jordan walks into a room, he expects everyone will pay attention to him. The article explained what he thought of himself by the fact that it says that he took upon himself the name Yahweh, and he gave others who worked under him names that indicated that they were subordinate to him. The article said that Michael Jordan is having a difficult time adjusting to not being the number one basketball player in the world.

Well, if the article is true, and I don't know that it isn't, then Michael Jordan is an example of many people whose happiness is dependent on their circumstances. There are people whose happiness or satisfaction in life is dependent on how well things are going in their lives. These are people who are jubilant when the sun is shining and it's not too humid, but they're depressed, angry when the storm clouds come into their lives.

Well, Psalm 84 speaks of a kind of blessedness, a happiness that a person can experience even when he passes through the valley of Baca. In Psalm 84 in Verse 6 we read of a person who, as he goes through this valley, turns it into a spring. He turns it into a source of refreshment. It also refers to this person turning the dry time in his life into the early rain which covers the experience with blessing.

Now, here the psalmist is using figures of speech that would have been very familiar to people in his time. Many or most people at that time were dependent on agriculture, and in Israel you had two kinds of rain. You had the early rain and you had the latter rain. Now, after the farmer planted the seeds, the success of the farming operation was dependent on the early rain. The early rain was to get the crop going, to get the seed that had been planted, to germinate. This was the most important rain, and without it the seed would not germinate. Previous to the early rain it may have been dry, but if the early rain came, the seed would germinate.

So the psalmist indicates that the believers can experience a kind of happiness that's not dictated by pleasant circumstances, and in the Bible we have numerous examples of people who were happy and blessed even though they passed through the valley of Baca, numerous examples of people whose happiness and contentment were not based on pleasant circumstances. One, of course, is the apostle Paul in Acts 16. In the earlier chapters of the book of Acts, Paul was beaten, he was stoned, he was left for dead on a number of occasions, and here in Acts 16, he was captured, he was flogged, he was thrown in jail, and yet while in jail, he wrote many letters in which he encouraged believers and challenged them to persevere and even rejoice. And while he was in jail in Acts 16, it says at midnight, he gathered together with his missionary team that was also in jail with him, and they sang and gave praises unto God.

One example of a letter that Paul wrote while he was in jail is the book of Philippians in which he didn't know whether he was going to live or whether he was going to die. He didn't know what the future held for him, and so in Philippians 1:20, he talks about living or dying. "It doesn't really make any difference to me. For to me, to live is Christ, and if it's God's will for me to die, that's okay too. That's gain." And in the book of Philippians, Paul who is in jail doesn't know what his future may hold. Fourteen times in that little four-chapter epistle, he encourages others to rejoice. He's not thinking about himself. He's not miserable. He's going through the valley of Baca, and yet what is he doing? He's encouraging others to rejoice. And when he wrote to the Thessalonians in 1 Thessalonians, he said, "Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, rejoice! Prayer without ceasing, in everything give thanks, for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you."

Of course another example of someone whose happiness or joy wasn't dependent upon circumstances was John Bunyan. John Bunyan was thrown in jail and he spent twelve years in jail. It was a long period of time when he went through the valley of Baca, and while there, John Bunyan was able by God's grace to turn that

valley of Baca into a spring, because it says as you read history that he wrote forty books while he was in jail. He didn't sit there and mope, feel sorry for himself, become bitter, or become resentful. No, he said, "God is in charge and God has me here for a purpose. Oh yeah, I've been wanting to write some books and haven't had time because I've been traveling so much and doing preaching." So he begins to write books, and he wrote forty books, one of them being one of the most famous books that's ever been written, *The Pilgrim's Progress—The Holy War*, and many others as well.

So from this we must draw the conclusion that God's kind of happiness is not based on your own self-esteem. It's not based upon your own accomplishments. It's not based on the way other people think about you. It's not based upon the adulation and respect of others, and it's not based on continuously pleasant circumstances. That's not what true joy of a Christian is based on. But I want you to notice what this divinely inspired Psalm says about people who experience true happiness and blessedness. In Verses 1 through 4, God tells us that the people who experience true happiness are people who consider God's dwelling place to be lovely.

Psalm 84:1 ~ How lovely are Your dwelling places,...

They love to be in the presence of God. Now, in the Old Testament, that was at least in part the temple. In our situation it's wherever God meets with His people, and He's promised to be with His people when they meet. A truly happy person loves to meet with God's people, and God has promised that He would meet with us here. He's everywhere, but there's a special way in which God meets with His people, speaks to His people, encourages His people, and lifts His people up. In Verse 4, a truly happy person is one who loves to praise God. It says:

Psalm 84:4

***How blessed are those who dwell in Your house!
They are ever praising You. Selah.***

They don't allow themselves to be controlled by their circumstances. That reminds me of Psalm 57. If you read the Psalm, he talks about unpleasant circumstances that he's going through, and he says:

Psalm 57:7 ~ My heart is fixed, O God, my heart is fixed: I will sing and give praise.

He said, “I’ve made a resolution that even though I’m in the midst of unpleasant circumstances, here’s what I’m going to do. I’m going to sing and I’m going to give praise. Bless the Lord at all times. Give praise unto His holy Name.” So, people who experience true happiness are people who are determined to praise God wherever they might be. Verse 5 shows us there are people whose happiness is not dependent upon themselves, but is dependent upon God for their strength. God is our refuge. God is our place of strength. He’s our very present help in the time of trouble, and when they’re in tough situations, they just turn to the Lord. They know they’re weak but they know God is strong. Verse 5 indicates that these truly joyful people are people who recognize their own weakness, their own inadequacy, and they depend upon God for their strength.

Psalm 84:5 ~ How blessed is the man whose strength is in You,...

And then Verse 5, I love Verse 5 here. It says:

Psalm 84:5 ~ How blessed is the man whose strength is in You,...

And then get that next phrase:

...In whose heart are the highways to Zion!

This man who’s blessed is a man who’s developed a highway in his heart and he just runs to God. It’s a throughway. It’s not some muddy old lane. It’s not like some of the roads in Africa that are just filled with potholes, big potholes in which you could lose your car, or whatever, but this is a highway, and when he’s in a situation, he just quickly shoots off to God. That’s a truly happy person who has a highway in his heart, and the highway is a highway in which he runs to God. And then in Verse 6, we’re told that the people who experience true happiness are people who think of and respond to the trials they experience in a positive way. They pass through the valley of Baca. Yeah, they pass through it, but they pass through it and they make that valley of Baca a spring, and they get early rains from the Lord, and they’re covered with blessings.

Psalm 84:6

***Passing through the valley of Baca they make it a spring;
The early rain also covers it with blessings.***

In Verse 8, these blessed people are people who experience true happiness because they pray and depend on God to bless them for Jesus' sake. Do you see Verse 8? He says:

Psalm 84:8

***O Lord God of hosts, hear my prayer;
Give ear, O God of Jacob! Selah.***

He turns to the Lord and he depends upon God. He cries out to God. And then in Verse 8 and 11, we're told that there are people who experience true happiness because they're totally dependent on God's grace for whatever favors they receive from God. Do you see that? He says

Psalm 84:8 ~ ...Give ear, O God of Jacob!

Well, who was the God of Jacob? The God of Jacob was a God of grace, amazing grace. It was not dependent upon Jacob's works, but upon the grace of God. And then in Verse 10 we're shown that the truly happy people are people who consider the spiritual blessings they have in Christ to be more valuable than all the treasures that the world has to offer. Jesus said in Matthew 16:26...

Matthew 16:26 ~ For what will it profit a man if he gains the whole world and forfeits his soul? Or what will a man give in exchange for his soul?

Here you have people who are turning to the Lord and they see God in Verse 11 as a sun and a shield. They get their warmth from Him, and God also protects them and takes care of them. He says God gives grace and glory. That's what our God gives. He gives grace. We're never put in a situation where God will not give us the grace. The Bible says God is able to make all grace abound to us so that we, having all sufficiency in all things, may abound unto every good work. And God gives glory. That's what's ahead of us. Glory is ahead of us, and he knows that no good thing will God withhold from those who walk uprightly.

Psalm 84:11

***For the Lord God is a sun and shield;
The Lord gives grace and glory;
No good thing does He withhold from those who walk uprightly.***

In Verse 10, the person who experiences true happiness is the person who considers the spiritual blessings that he has in Christ to be more valuable than the treasures that the world has to offer.

Psalm 84:10

***For a day in Your courts is better than a thousand outside.
I would rather stand at the threshold of the house of my God
Than dwell in the tents of wickedness.***

In this whole Psalm, we see that the people who are truly happy are people who have a high view of God. He's the Lord of hosts. He's the Lord who's in control of everything. That's a high view of God, and he repeats that statement about God being the Lord of hosts on several occasions in the Psalm in Verse 1, Verse 8, Verse 11, and Verse 12. And then this passage indicates that the people who experience true happiness are people who have personally submitted to God as their King and their God, and so we have him saying in Verse 3:

Psalm 84:3 ~ ... My King and my God.

He's acknowledged God to be King, and if He's King, He has the right to decide whatever happens in our lives and whatever happens in the world. And He is *my* God. There's this personal relationship that he has with God. Now, at the beginning of our message today, I mentioned that this Psalm was written to tell us something in which most people are very interested. If you talk to most parents and ask them, "What do you want for your children?" I don't think you'd find many parents who would say that their desire for their children is that their children would be miserable and unhappy people. Or if you talk to most people about their own personal desire, I don't think you'd find many people who would say that their personal desire for themselves is that they want to go through life as a miserable or unhappy person, and yet our world and even our churches are filled with people who want to be happy and blessed, but they're not.

Some time ago Dr. Martyn Lloyd-Jones wrote a book which was entitled *Spiritual Depression—It's Causes and It's Cure*, and in that book, Dr. Lloyd-Jones says that it is his conviction that one of the reasons that we as Christians are making such little impact in the world in which we're living is because there are so many of us who are unhappy. Why would they want to become a Christian? They look at our lives and they don't see this kind of happiness.

Now, if it's true that most people want to be happy, and yet many of them aren't, that ought to lead us to ask another question, and the question is: Why is this true? Why is it that you have so many unhappy people in our world and even in our churches? Now, it's my conviction that if you and I were to have the privilege of speaking directly to God, and we were to ask Him, "Do You want Your people to be blessed? Do you want Your people to be happy?" I really don't think that if the Lord were to respond to us audibly, I don't think He'd say, "No, I don't want My people to be blessed. I want them to be miserable." I know that that's true, that God doesn't want us to be miserable. I know that's true for many reasons, one of them being what He says here in Psalm 84.

Here in Psalm 84, God indicates that His people are a blessed people. He specifically tells us that in Verse 4, Verse 5, and Verse 12. Believers, whether they are Old Testament believers or New Testament believers, are *how blessed* fortunate people, and because that's true, they ought to be a happy people. They ought to be a people who according to Verse 2 of Psalm 84 are singing for joy. They ought to be a people who according to Verse 4 are ever praising God. They ought to be a happy people, because according to Verse 6, God can turn their valleys of Baca into a place of springs. They ought to be a happy people because they can go as this passage tells us in Verse 7, they can go from strength to strength. They ought to be a happy people, because in their hearts they have a highway to the Lord, a highway that is never blocked. We've got to run out to God and know that God will hear us. We ought to be a happy people, because according to Verse 9, God has committed to bless us because of Jesus Christ the anointed One. Look at what the Psalmist says:

Psalm 84:9

***Behold our shield, O God,
And look upon the face of Your anointed.***

That's Jesus. That's the Messiah, and God is going to bless us not simply because we're such wonderful people, because we're not, but because of Jesus. Look upon Jesus. Lord, I know You've already blessed me in Him, but I just ask that You would continue to bless me for Jesus' sake, not for my own sake, because I don't deserve it, but Jesus does. In Verse 11, we ought to be a happy people because He's promised to be a sun and a shield to us, and He will give us grace, and He will give us glory. We ought to be a happy people, because according to several verses in this Psalm, the one who is their God is the Lord of hosts, and He is their King, and He is their God.

Now, as I close, I want to ask you to join with me in making the commitment that in the remainder of 2014 and even beyond that, you will commit yourself to refusing to think mostly about what you don't have. You want to commit yourself to refuse to think mostly about your problems, your valleys of Baca, and that you will join with me in committing yourself to take yourself by the scruff of the neck when you find yourself being tempted to be cast down, when you find yourself being tempted to think negatively, when you find yourself tempted to think pessimistically, you take yourself by the scruff of the neck and you say, "Stop it!" Don't be passive, be proactive, and tell yourself, "You are not going that way." You're going to remind yourself of who you are and what you have in Christ Jesus. Commit yourself to thinking about how blessed you really are in Christ.

Earlier in our service Pastor Ty read for us Ephesians 1 where Paul says, "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in heavenly places in Christ Jesus." And then he goes on to mention some of the blessings that we have in Christ Jesus. Peter does essentially the same thing in 1 Peter 1. He says:

1 Peter 1:3 ~ Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to His great mercy has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead,

The book of 1 Peter is a book which tells us how we should handle suffering. The word *suffering* is repeated again and again in 1 Peter. He begins the book by saying, "Remember what God has done for you. Remember that God has, according to His great mercy, caused you to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead. Remember that you have obtained an inheritance which is imperishable and undefiled, and it won't fade away. Remember that you have an inheritance that is reserved in heaven. Remember that you're protected by the power of God through faith for a salvation which is ready to be revealed in the last time. In this you greatly rejoice even though now for a little while if necessary, you've been distressed by various trials."

Well, we have every reason to be a rejoicing person, and Psalm 84 lays out some of those reasons. We don't trust in other people. No, cursed is the man who makes the arm of flesh his strength, and cursed is the man who trusts in pleasant circumstances, trusts in the affirmation of people, but he finds his strength, he's dependent upon the Lord, and he knows that God will give grace, and God will give glory.

May God help us to realize who we are in Christ, what we have in Christ, and not be passive but be proactive, to stand ourselves up in a corner when we're tempted to go down the tubes in discouragement, and say, "Stop that! You're not going that way, because according to the word of God, you have every reason to be happy, to be joyful, because of who you are and what you have in Jesus Christ," and then to go to the word of God and remind yourself of who you are and what you have in Jesus Christ. And as we do that, we'll be a testimony for the Lord, we'll be a testimony to the people around us, and as Peter says, they'll want to come to us, and they'll want to know the reason for the hope that is within us. It opens the door for marvelous evangelistic opportunities as others see what God has done in us and how He has become our joy and our blessedness.

Our Heavenly Father, thank You so much for Your word. Thank You that it's so practical. Thank You that in Your word, You give us everything we need for life and for godliness. Thank You that the Lord Jesus said that He came that we might have joy, and that our joy might be full. We see this lived out for us and worked out for us in Psalm 84. We pray that You would help us to reflect on these things, remember these things, and live in accordance with these things, so that You might get praise and glory as people see that You are the source of our strength, that You are our all in all. We pray this in Jesus Christ's Name, Amen.

This audio presentation, description, and transcription by Providence Church in Duluth, Georgia, USA, is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-NoDerivs 3.0 License.

 Except where otherwise noted, this work is licensed under <http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/3.0/>

Attribution:

Based on work at Providence Church, Duluth, GA, USA and found online at <http://www.providenceduluth.org>. Permission for use beyond the scope of this license may be requested by contacting Providence Church, Duluth, GA through their website.