

7/9/23 - Psalm 84 - "Praise, Power, and Peace in God"

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- [0 : 01] Good morning. If you'd like to turn to Psalm 84. How lovely is your dwelling place, O Lord of hosts.
- My soul longs, yes, thanks, for the courts of the Lord. My heart and flesh sing for joy to the living God. Even the sparrow finds a home, and the swallow a nest for herself.
- Where she may lay your young. At your altars, O Lord of hosts, my King and my God. Blessed are those who dwell in your house, ever singing your praise.
- Blessed are those whose strength is in you, and whose heart are the highways to Zion. As they go through the valley of Baca, they make it a place of springs.
- The early rain also covers it with pools. They go from strength to strength. Each one appears before God of Zion. O Lord God of hosts, hear my prayer.
- [1 : 04] Give ear. O God of Jacob. Behold our shield, O God. Look on the face of your anointed. For a day in your courts is better than a thousand elsewhere.
- I would rather be a doorkeeper in the house of my God than dwell in the tents of wickedness. For the Lord God is a sun and shield. The Lord bestows favor and honor.
- No good thing does he withhold from those who walk uprightly. O Lord of hosts, blessed is the one who trusts in you. Amen. Amen. Amen. All right.
- Well, what a wonderful psalm. But before we begin this sermon, let's bow our heads in prayer. Father God, I thank you so much for all that you are and all that you do.
- I thank you, Lord God, that you are majestic, wonderful, merciful, and good, and that we can trust in you for our rest and our peace.
- [2 : 16] I pray that the Holy Spirit would guide our reading and understanding of the Scripture today so that we might be conformed into the image of your Son. I pray all of this in the mighty name of Jesus Christ.
- Amen. Sorry if my voice is a little shaky. That Million Angels Fall song is so good. That is my favorite. That is amazing. It is a perfect depiction of the fullness of worship for all of God's people and all of his creation, really, together.
- And so that is just such a powerful song. But for those who don't know me, my name is David Suarez, and it has got my name up there, Pastoral Apprentice Perfect. I am so excited to see all of you today for all the faces that I know and all the faces that are new.
- This is a wonderful chance for us to gather together and to see what the Lord has shown us in Psalm 84. In this sermon, and specifically in this psalm, we see a topic which is very important to a lot of us, and a topic that is, for me, very personally important, and that's about exhaustion, struggle, and resting in God.
- For those who do not know me, you might not know that I have a rare kind of condition that makes me constantly sleepy. It's a condition called hypersomnia, so basically I'm always at the edge of falling asleep.

[3 : 42] Thank God there's treatment for it, so don't worry, you're not going to see me falling asleep during this sermon. It's not like that. God has blessed me with wonderful doctors. But it's not something that only I struggle with.

Everybody knows what it's like to be tired. Everybody knows what it's like to have not just biological exhaustion, but I know people who have far worse than me, emotional exhaustion, people who have experienced loss, people who have experienced the difficulties that life brings, and there's a lot of them.

So, for all of you, I would ask, have you ever felt exhausted? Not just tired, and not just sleepy, but exhausted.

That sense of weight on your feet as you try to struggle to roll out of bed, each step a little bit heavier, the exhaustion waiting for yet another phone call you have to make, yet another book that you said you would read, but you put off for a couple months, yet another assignment, another application you said you'd turn in, but you didn't.

Have you ever felt exhausted and tired, even of doing good, of asking for forgiveness, or forgiving those who have wronged you, pursuing God?

[5 : 07] Have you ever felt exhausted of pursuing God? If you have this, scripture is a wonderful breath for those who are tired, and a renewal for those who have known exhaustion.

And I praise God for this scripture. Now, with all those questions I asked, and sorry for throwing a pop quiz at you, an emotional pop quiz on a Sunday morning. There won't be a quiz after, don't worry.

I think it's interesting thinking about Psalm 84. As a matter of fact, usually when we think of the psalms that are our favorites, many of us will probably, and I'm sure many of you are thinking right now, Psalm 23, the Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want.

Perhaps some of you instead go to Psalm 139, and you see the Lord as a steadfast foundation. But what's amazing is that the well-known prince of preachers, as many call him, Charles Spurgeon, actually said that Psalm 84 was the sweetest of the psalms, a pearl amidst the psalms.

And mind you, there's 150 psalms, so that's quite a claim to make. But as I studied and read this scripture and prepared this sermon, I could not help but agree, this is the sweetest of the psalms.

[6 : 33] And so, seeing this beautiful psalm that we'll be speaking of today written by the sons of Korah, this psalm is entitled, Praise, Power, and Peace in God.

This wonderful psalm is written by the Korahites. The Korahites were, according to 1 and 2 Chronicles, the individuals who God had chosen to be the doorkeepers to the tabernacle.

They also would sweep the altars of God, and eventually they grew to be chosen as those who would sing and lead worship in the tabernacle of God. And if you don't know what the tabernacle is, that is a word that just means the dwelling.

So the tabernacle is where God dwelt with His people, and He was with them as they went through their days. So these Korahites knew what it was like to be in the direct presence of God all of the time, day in and day out, sunup to sundown.

They were in the presence of God. As a result, they wrote this psalm, this song, which has three blessings described in it, thus the title of the sermon.

[7 : 40] The blessings that come from praising God. The blessings that come from God's strength and His power. And the beautiful blessing of peace in God, which is what our three sections for this sermon will be.

The first section, praising God, is based off of the first four verses. This sermon is going to be very simple because it's structured just as the psalm is, into four verses for each section.

In the first section, entitled Praising God, we see these psalmists describing how desperate they are to be in the tabernacle of God. They explain that their soul longs and faints for the Lord.

And the Hebrew word for faint here is meant to express someone who's at the edge of death. If they don't get water soon, they'll die. If they don't get food soon, they'll die.

Faint is meant to express desperation. And these people who spent all of their time in the presence of God, even being separated for a second, felt like death to them.

[8 : 46] It's not as if they ever grew tired of God's presence, but being in His presence only made it all the more amazing, awe-inspiring, beautiful, because the beauty of God is infinite.

There is no end to it. And so, when they were yet again returning to the tabernacle, as they did every day, they felt renewed, and they say that they sing for joy to the living God.

Now, that's an interesting phrase. It's the only time that the living God is used to describe God in this psalm, only once, which means it's important. You see, the Korhites knew that it is the one whom we worship that renews us.

And this is the truth throughout the Scripture, that whoever you worship, the one to whom your praise is given, to them you are united. In Psalm 135, it actually emphasizes this point, and so does the rest of the Scripture when it talks about idolatry.

Psalm 135 states, So, if the Israelites, if the Korhites worshiped themselves, there would be no end to their exhaustion, there would be no renewal of life, because, as I've already prompted all of you to say before, we all grow exhausted.

[10 : 27] Do not unite yourself to people who grow exhausted, lest you get more exhausted. And yet, what if they, the Korhites, worshiped a different God, some other idol, some other dead, false idol, if you unite yourself to a dead and false idol, you shall grow to no death and deception.

Do not unite yourself to false idols, but it is only by praising the one true living God that they experienced life, because God is life.

And so, they knew that God's presence was life itself, a fact which I can assure you Adam and Eve knew very well. When they were kicked out of the garden, they were separated from God, and in that moment, they knew death, because to be apart from God is death.

And yet, the psalmists don't stop there. They continue on speaking about something which sounds a little strange at first. They say, sparrows find a home and swallows a nest.

Why is it that they changed the topic to be about some random birds? Well, to us Western listeners, this might have not made much sense, but to the Hebrews, to the Israelites, this is a very powerful claim.

[11 : 42] You see, sparrows were birds of very little value. They're not very attractive birds. They're not like eagles with beautiful, massive wings and great coloration. They're little sparrows.

They're just small, little, very uninteresting birds that are pretty worthless, even in the Gospels. Jesus goes on to say, cannot two sparrows be sold for a penny, right?

Which means that one sparrow itself is less than a penny. And yet, these uninteresting, small, valueless little birds that all they do really is sing and chirp are allowed by God to find a home in His house.

Swallows, on the other hand, were birds who were known for constantly darting around. They were constantly migrating. And when they weren't migrating, they were trying to find a place to build their nests.

They were restless. And by the time the swallows finally found a place to build their nest, reminder, their migratory birds, they would have to leave the nest that they spent all this time finding a place to build it.

[12 : 45] And when they came back, their nest was destroyed. Why? Because they couldn't find a good place, a steadfast place to build their home. Yet even the restless swallows found a place to nest for them and for their children.

Yes, God welcomes the worthless and the restless into His closest presence. A beautiful truth about the wonderful perfection of God, this tension of the perfect holy God and small, worthless creatures, and yet this perfect holy God welcomes them into His presence.

How can this be except for a perfect, gracious God? There in God's presence, the worthless and the restless find a home.

And the Korahites knew this. As a quick note, the Israelites actually would not remove the nests of any birds who would build their nests in the tabernacle of God. Why?

Because the Israelites said, oh, this bird is smart. It actually chose a good place to build its home because God's presence is a perfect place to build your home. And so they would not remove the nest, which is why the Korahites all day what they heard was singing.

[14 : 03] The swallows and the sparrows in their nest inside the tabernacle of God were chirping and singing. The Korahites felt that they were just like those birds, worthless and restless, yet in God's presence they found value and rest.

Which is why it writes, blessed are those who dwell in your house ever singing your praise. Whether you are a Christian or not, there is a question that I have to ask as a result.

Do you ever feel like you don't deserve to be in God's presence? If you answered yes, then you are correct.

The truth is that we don't deserve to be in God's presence. But that doesn't matter because God still welcomes the worthless and the restless. It's not about how we see ourselves.

It's about the goodness of God that he would welcome the restless and the worthless into the infinite perfect presence of his grace. That is good news.

[15 : 14] Wonderful good news. That God would welcome them. And not only in light of the reality of him bringing in the sparrows and the swallows, but in the far greater and infinite reality that we have in Christ.

That in Christ and his perfect work on the cross, we know that God welcomes the sinners, the broken, the valleys of the world that are low and set apart in the worst way.

And he takes them and lifts them up and makes them set apart in his presence in a holy way. In Christ, we are welcomed. Even the worthless sparrows.

Quoting what our Lord says in Matthew 10, 29 to 31, he states, Are not two sparrows sold for a penny? And not one of them will fall to the ground apart from your father.

But even the hairs on your head are all numbered. Fear not, therefore. You are of more value than many sparrows. Accept the invitation.

[16 : 21] Build your life in his presence. And you will see that you are renewed in praising the living God. But the psalm does not end there because of how wonderful this psalm is.

It continues to grow in strength. Section two, finding power in God. In the next section, we see this new theme develop where the Korahites take the description off of themselves in the tabernacle and now change the focus.

But before I let the Korahites do that, I'll ask all of you another question. Have you ever felt your exhaustion worsen as the hours go by?

Let's say you're on a long journey, a long trip, and you're driving, and now four hours of driving has passed by and you feel exhausted. You have to take a break or switch out with someone.

Have you ever felt exhausted as the day goes on? Have you ever felt exhausted as the week goes on? Each and every single morning, it's more difficult to take the blanket off and roll out of bed and get ready for the day.

[17 : 28] Have you felt exhausted going from strength to weakness as time goes on? The Korhites knew that well, but in this section, in the next third of this passage, they start to describe all the Israelites outside of the tabernacle.

All the Israelites who, though not being constantly in the presence of God directly, had to take these three journeys throughout the year to go to Jerusalem to be in the tabernacle of God.

The three journeys they would have to take would be during Passover, Pentecost, and Sukkot, the celebration of booths for their special holidays, which means that they would have to, each of these people alone, leave their families, all of the men of the family would have to leave their families behind wherever they were and travel to Jerusalem on a pilgrimage.

And the Korhites, seeing these people travel, leaving their homes and coming towards Jerusalem, are amazed at these people because they see the long, difficult journey.

They didn't have Uber. They didn't have helicopters or planes to make this trip easy. So they had to travel on foot. Or for the few who actually had an animal, maybe they could use that. But this was a difficult journey.

[18 : 51] And yet, in this, where you expect them to start out strong and then grow weak as they get close to Jerusalem, the psalmist says something shocking.

They write, Blessed are those whose strength is in you and whose heart are the highways to Zion. As they go through the valley of Baca, they make it a place of springs.

The early rain also covers it with pools. They go from strength to strength. Each one appears before God in Zion. How is that possible?

That these people, starting a pilgrimage all the way from their home, having to go through the long and hot heat of the day and the cold of the night, marching towards Jerusalem, how is it that they can go from strength to strength on their way to Jerusalem?

Well, what's amazing is that these individuals who started out by themselves as they went towards this valley of Baca, a real location in Israel that is extremely dry, extremely hot, the place that is translated literally the valley of tears, in this place, they go from strength to strength.

[20 : 16] Because as all the pilgrims, as all of God's people would go through this horrible, dry, hot valley, they would meet each other. And they would go from one person and join another person, from one to two, and then they would join other parties of pilgrims and go from two to four.

And by the time you're walking through the valley of Baca, a place that is dry and hot and exhausting and dangerous, you find a crowd of God's people singing praise and worship.

For the mourning and the groans of an individual are somber, but the sound of the multitudes is a choir. And you see that come together in this moment.

You see all of God's people go from the strength of themselves to the strength of each other as they march towards Zion, towards the city of God.

And amazingly enough, as they go through this valley that's super dry, they make it a place of springs. They actually work together to leave behind something for those who are still far off, who have not yet passed through the valley of tears.

[21 : 25] And yet it's not just God's people relying on each other, but the psalm makes sure that we know that God is still providing for the most of all. It states the early rain also covers it with pools.

Yes, we can try to build ourselves and dig ourselves springs, but it is God who sends the rains to fill it. And so as God's people relied on each other for strength so that each one appears before God in Zion, the Lord himself is strengthening them and providing for them during their journey so that the valley of tears becomes a valley of springs.

For those who are exhausted, they find renewal in God and in resting in his people. For that which you find strength is only as good as the strength of the one that you're bound.

And God is almighty. As a matter of fact, that's the direct translation of many of these descriptions of God, the almighty God, the Lord of hosts.

His strength is a strength that you can trust in. And yet, somehow, many people struggle in life alone.

[22 : 38] Brothers and sisters, who are brothers and sisters in Christ, do not let your brothers and sisters struggle alone, quietly, sobbing and weeping and struggling and mourning by themselves.

Let their mourning turn to rejoicing, their weeping to joy, as we join together as one body, united in Christ, so that the exhaustion which takes us day by day, that daily dread, would turn to daily bread, and in Christ we would find renewal.

And for those who hear of such a powerful, strengthened Christian community, and you are not a Christian, why?

The only thing stopping you from linking arms with us as we march through this valley towards the city of our God is faith. Believe and be united to this body.

And yet, the psalmists do not stop there. In this powerful, final section, speaking of the peace in God, the psalm zooms out the most it has right here and right now.

[23 : 48] Instead of the Korahites talking about themselves like they did in the first section, the Korahites describing the pilgrims of God in the second, now we see the Korahites and the pilgrims all in one place.

This zooms out to show all of God's people. They have made it through their journey. They have arrived in Jerusalem. They are in the city of God with the Korahites in the tabernacle, in the presence of God.

And that is what we see in this last section, the arrival of God's people. According to this psalm, God is a sun and a shield to His people. In the darkness of the world and the darkness of that pilgrimage, the Lord is a sun to His people, casting out the darkness, separating it just as He did in Genesis when He pushed back the darkness of chaos and made His divine light order all things.

That same light is guiding and covering God's people. And likewise, He is a shield to His people. Now that they have arrived in His holy city, there will be no one who takes them away.

We have a full and steadfast assurance of the protection of our Lord for His people in His presence. On their way to Jerusalem, the Hebrew people would not let anyone distract them from their journey.

[25 : 10] No wickedness. For, as the psalmist wrote, a day in your courts is better than a thousand elsewhere. I would rather be a doorkeeper in the house of my God than dwell in the tents of wickedness.

Now, many of you might be thinking of that one song from a while back, Better is one day in your courts. Yeah, I'm not going to sing that because I don't want to hurt people's ears, but it's a wonderful song, and it's a very powerful song that describes the power, the beauty, of just a day in the courts of the Lord.

I would rather be a doorkeeper in the house of my God than dwell in the tents of wickedness, which the Korites who wrote this were. They were doorkeepers. That's what they did. They just opened the door, and yet they would rather do that than dwell in the tents of wickedness.

Now, again, this might not make as much sense to us living modern day, but to dwell in someone's tent is a very personal matter. Usually, one would keep their servants on the outside of their tent.

That's where the servants go. But if someone finds that you are of equal value or the things that they honor, you embody, they would say, you're an honorable person. According to my standards, I want you to be in my tent, to dwell in my tent.

[26 : 26] And yet, to be considered honorable and equal to evil is not a thing to be desired. If a serial killer, for instance, fun topic on a Sunday morning, if a serial killer invited me into their tent saying, you know what?

Everything that I honor and respect, that's embodied in you. I want you to be in my tent, to dwell with me in my tent. I would, number one, respectfully decline. Number two, I would think that there's probably something wrong with me if a serial killer thinks that I'm on equal standing with them.

I've got to do some repensing. There's something wrong there. But then, number three, I would quickly and immediately turn and be a servant in the tent of my God than ever dwell in the tent of wickedness.

Now, of course, I know it sounds like a silly example, right? A serial killer is an easy option. But the sad truth is that we do this constantly. We constantly choose to dwell in the tents of wickedness.

We constantly choose to pursue the respect of the wicked who cannot save us, who do not know what is best for us, who do not care what is best for us, who use us, abuse us, and throw us away, who cannot love us and never will know us.

[27 : 39] And we desire the respect and the greatest honor of these people and in that moment reject that which pleases God.

We do this constantly. It's even been written in Dante's Inferno and Paradise Lost, better to reign in hell than serve in heaven is what the horrible character Satan is described as saying in those books.

And yet, we do this so often, desiring the respect and greatest honor amongst the evil and not the respect and the desire of our Lord who knows us.

How could we? How could we? It is always infinitely better to be a simple servant of the Lord than to be the most honored amongst sinners.

And that's because you can trust in Him. God is perfectly good and God's people, whether they are already in His presence in heaven or on their way, can trust Him to bring them home and keep them safe.

[28 : 51] That is why the Korahites could say, blessed is the one who trusts in the Lord. The one that we trust, to them we are united. And this applies to us today too.

We can sing this psalm along with them, but more than they ever could for while in the past they had a tabernacle that they had to travel to made of human hands, those who believe in Christ become the temple of God.

According to 1 Corinthians 6, 19, we no longer need to travel in order to be in God's direct presence. What was far for the Israelites is near for us.

God Himself, the Holy Spirit Himself, is living in us for those who are in Christ. The Holy Spirit is a seal placed on us.

He is a promise from God that we will appear, each of us, before God in Zion, in His holy temple in heaven. The same God who promised to bring His people into the tabernacle, the same living God who is worthy of all praise and who invigorates us in praising Him, the same loving God who strengthens His people by His almighty nature and the people to whom He strengthens, the same gracious God who gives peace to His wandering, anxious pilgrims, is the same God who calls us today to rest in Him.

[30 : 24] no more wandering, no more seeking for rest in the tents of the wicked, no more thinking that there might be some other path to eternal peace, no more thinking that there's some other God, some other religion, some other political or philosophical worldview that you think will somehow allow you to achieve perfection of peace.

there is no other way to the Father except through the Son. Jesus is quite clear that He is the way, the truth, and the life.

None comes to the Father except through Him. For all who are exhausted and desire rest, remember this, blessed is the one who trusts in the Lord, who dwells in God's presence, and whose hearts rely on Him for strength.

Let us pray.