

## **Better is One Day In Your Courts Than Thousands Elsewhere**

### **Psalm 84**

**Introduction:** 1) In recent years there has arisen among evangelical college students a movement called “Passion” or the “268 Generation.” On their webpage, their purpose statement says, “Passion exists to glorify God – uniting students in worship and prayer for spiritual awakening in this generation” Their vision statement: “... to seek the face of God, asking Him to ignite in our souls a passionate pursuit of Jesus Christ and a desire to spread His fame to everyone on earth.”

2) Growing out of the Passion movement has been a genre of music, much of which is rooted in Scripture, particularly the Psalms. One of the more popular is “Better is One Day.” It is based on Psalm 84.

#### **Better Is One Day** written by: Matt Redman

How lovely is Your dwelling place,  
Oh Lord Almighty  
My soul longs and even faints for You  
For here my heart is satisfied,  
within Your presence  
I sing beneath the shadow of Your wings

Better is one day in Your courts  
Better is one day in Your house  
Better is one day in Your courts  
Than thousands elsewhere

One thing I ask and I would seek,  
to see Your beauty  
To find You in the place Your glory dwells

My heart and flesh cry out,  
For You the living God  
Your Spirit's water for my soul  
I've tasted and I've seen,  
Come once again to me

I will draw near to You  
I will draw near to You

3) James Boice calls Psalm 84 “the psalm of the janitors” (p. 687) because of v. 10 and the reference to the “doorkeeper.”

It is a kaleidoscope of poetic genres or styles, being composed of a hymn, prayer, lament and song of Zion.

However, with its prayer for the Lord’s anointed, His Messiah, in v. 9, it anticipates the coming of the captain of our salvation in Heb. 2:10, the Lord Jesus, who is our Shield and defender against the evil forces of sin, the devil, death, hell and the grave. In Him we are more than conquerors (Rom 8:37). It is right for our soul too long, even faint, for such a Savior.

4) Derek Kidner says, “longing is written all over this psalm... not unlike that of Psalms 42 and 43. Written by one of the Korahite temple singers, it draws attention in laser beam fashion to the soul who longs for the presence of God so deeply, he can exclaim, “Better is one day in your courts than a thousand elsewhere” (*NIV*).

Trans: While it would be possible to examine the text around the 3 “Blessed” statements in vs. 4, 5 and 12, we will follow a four-fold division and highlight 4 truths that will enable a person to make the startling confession in v. 10. [Read the verse].

#### **I. We must have a passion for the living God.     84:1-4**

- Our text is rich in its titles for our God:
  - vs. 1, 3, 8, 12: “Lord of host” or “Lord Almighty” (*Jehovah Sabaoth*)
  - vs. 1: “the living God”
  - vs. 3: “My King and my God

vs. 7: “God in Zion”

vs. 8: “God of Jacob”

vs. 11: “Lord God”

Such a great and awesome God should be pursued in fervent passion. The Psalmist notes 4 facets of this passion in stanza 1.

**1) Acknowledge the Lord.      84:1**

- The place where the Lord dwells is said to be “lovely,” beloved. God had dwelt in a tent and then a temple in the Old Testament. It is probably Solomon’s temple that is in view in this psalm. Now, however, He dwells preeminently in Jesus Christ who in John 2:19 referred to His body as “this temple” (*naos*). Now the Lord also makes His place of dwelling the Church (1 Cor. 3:16) and the Christian (1 Cor. 6:19). What a glorious place of dwelling: in Christ, in the Church, in us. Acknowledge the beauty of His place of dwelling.

**2) Long for the Lord.      84:2**

- The beauty of the temple reminds us of the beauty of our God! Thus the Psalmist longs or pines, even faints for the place where God reveals Himself.
- Both his heart and flesh cry out, glad for anyone to hear: I want the one true and living God.
- Psalm 42:1 is a fitting complement where again a son of Korah writes, “As the deer pants for the water brooks, so pants my soul for You, O God. My soul thirsts for God, for the living God.”

### 3) Honor the Lord.                      84:3

- The Psalmist looks at the birds who make their home near the altars of the temple. He thinks: what an honor and privilege is theirs to be so near “My God and King.”
- Sparrows were almost worthless (Matt. 10:29; Luke 12:6). Yet Jesus said they mattered to God (Matt. 10:29, 31). Swallows were restless, always in the air going here and going there. Yet when it came time to bear and care for their young, they found a home near their Creator, near the King.
- Lord Almighty, living God, my King and my God, the birds get to live where I want to be; near and next to you.
- Question: are you as smart as these birds?!

### 4) Praise the Lord.                      84:4

- Here is the 1<sup>st</sup> of the 3 beatitudes in this psalm (vs. 4, 5, 12). If the birds are blessed to be near your house, how blessed are your servants who get to live (dwell) in your house. Selah! Think about that!
- Having pined, even panted after the Lord, they will continually (still, ever), be praising you.
- Such opportunity. Such a privilege. Such an honor. Such a blessing. Those with a passion for the living God get to live in His house and worship Him forever. All are invited. None are excluded whose passion is rightly set on Him.

## II. We must trust in the power of the God of Zion.                      84:5-7

- This section commences with the 2<sup>nd</sup> beatitude. It is the language of the pilgrim who is on a journey, either literally or figuratively, to the place of the Lord’s presence. To

make the journey safely, we need the strength, the power of the great God of Zion. Zion was the Temple hill, Jehovah's place. Sometimes it stood for the whole city of Jerusalem. The great Lord of hosts, Jehovah Sabaoth, unique manifested Himself at this place. To get there safely, we are instructed in 2 specific ways.

**1) Let the Lord strengthen you.      84:5-6**

- It is the blessed man who finds His strength in the Lord Almighty, the living God (cf. Phil. 4:13, 19).
- Such a person sets his heart on making pilgrimage, on taking whatever journey or road is necessary to get to God.
- They may pass thru the "Valley of Bacca," a valley of "weeping," agony, sorrow. But the same Good Shepherd who leads us through the valley of the shadow of death (Ps. 23:4), will bring us to make the place of our tears a place of springs, of blessing, of rejoicing. Springs bubble up from beneath and rains will come down from above bringing refreshment and reviving to the soul of the pilgrim.
- These are more than "mercy drops round us are falling!" These are showers of blessing indeed.
- As we seek the Lord on our spiritual journey He will strengthen us.

**2) Let the Lord sustain you.      84:7**

- As we move toward a greater intimacy and realization of the Lord's presence, it is in the strength of the Lord step by step as vs. 7 makes clear. "From strength to strength" sounds very much like the "from glory to glory" of 2 Cor. 3:18.
- The Lord's strength in us (v. 5), is the same strength that in v. 7 sustains us and raises us from one level to another.

- In ancient Israel as they would get near to Mt. Zion and the temple, excitement would build and the passion for the house of the Lord grew stronger and stronger. Perhaps they were tired of the long journey, but the strength of the Lord kept them going, renewing their strength and passion as they drew closer to His temple.
- As we draw near to our Lord Jesus, we will find His sustaining power and magnetic pull more than sufficient to bring us closer to Him. His beauty increases. His glory grows brighter.
- He will sustain you, from strength to strength. So keep pressing on toward the Lord. How did Paul put it in Phil. 3:12-14, “Not that I have already attained, or am already perfected; but I press on, that I may lay hold of that for which Christ Jesus has also laid hold of me. (13) Brethren, I do not count myself to have apprehended; but one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind and reaching forward to those things which are ahead, (14) I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus.”

### **III. We must seek the protection of the God of Jacob. 84:8-9**

The God of Jacob is a God who wrestles with His children, getting them to the place of brokenness and blessing. He is the God who protects His chosen one (Jacob) who fearfully approaches his brother Esau whom he had tricked and deceived robbing him of both his birthright and blessing. He is a God who is faithful even when we are faithless.

**Transition:** Therefore as we draw near, seeking His protection, how does the psalmist instruct us?

#### **1) Seek Him in prayer. 84:8**

- Vs. 8 is another excellent example of Hebrew semantic parallelism. It is also chiastically structured

O Lord God of hosts	\	hear my prayer
Give ear	/	O God of Jacob

- *Yahweh Elohim Sabaoth*, the most full divine title in the psalm, is the one to whom we are to direct our prayers, the one whose ear we seek. As Lord God Almighty He can both hear our prayer and answer our prayer. As the God of Jacob, we may need to wrestle with Him in prayer, but we know He keeps His covenant promises and will be our protector against that which would harm us.

## 2) See His defense.      **84:9**

- Verse 9 is again parallel poetry.
  - “Behold (*NIV*, “look upon”) our shield”
  - “Look upon the face of Your anointed” (*Heb.* Messiah)
- Our shield or defense is the Lord’s Messiah. In his day, the psalmist would have thought of the Davidic King, the protector of the people. The psalmist and the people of God, however, would have hoped for and anticipated that greatest Davidic King of whom 2 Samuel 7:13 promised: “He shall build a house for My name, and I will establish the throne of His kingdom forever.” Once again Psalm 2 cast its mammoth shadow over this song as it speaks of the Lord’s Messiah whom “I have set as My King on My holy hill of Zion” (Psalm 2:5).
- Such a King has the smile of God on Him. And no wonder, this King is God’s Son! What a defender. What a protector. What a Savior.

#### **IV. We must desire the presence of the Lord of Host. 84:10-12**

- In this final stanza the psalmist speaks to the joy and desirability of being in the Lord's presence in comparison to anything else. These are 3 of the most beautiful and comforting Scriptures in all of the Bible. They speak for themselves, and they carefully guide us into the presence of the Lord.

##### **1) Approach the Lord humbly. 84:10**

- The presence of the Lord is superior to anything else there is.
  - Better to have just one day in His presence than a thousand elsewhere.
  - Better a doorkeeper, a lowly servant, in a place where people ignore you, in His house, than to make yourself at home in the place where the wicked live.

**Illustration:** What I told my boys growing up that really stuck with them: "I'll be happy just to be a janitor for Jesus when I get to heaven. That will be enough just to be there with Him." But don't forget Psalm 23:6, "I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever!"  
PTL!

##### **2) Approach the Lord expectantly. 84:11**

The Lord (*Yahweh*) is a sun and shield. He gives grace and glory. Only here is our God specifically called "a sun."

- As the sun, He shines His glory on us.
  - As a shield He showers His grace on us.
- Indeed, and what a promise, "No good thing will He withhold from those who walk uprightly." This is the Romans 8:28 of the Old Testament. He is our sun and shield. He gives grace and glory.
- The more we thirst for Him the more He blesses.



- Illustration: Cindy Bush and she and Russ's fight with cancer: "It is hard, but it is not bad!" He is with us: providing like the sun and protecting like a shield. He is with us: giving us His grace (goodness) and His glory (greatness). He is good and He is great.
- He did not withhold His Son! Will He not with Him also freely give us all things? (Romans 8:32).

### 3) **Approach the Lord faithfully.**      **84:12**

- Those who long for the Lord must "believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him" (Hebrews 11:6).
- Vs. 1 and 12 form an inclusio or brackets with the phrase "O Lord of hosts" or "O Lord Almighty" (*NIV*).
- To long for Him is to trust Him.  
To faint after Him is to trust Him.  
To cry out for Him is to trust Him.  
To live in His house is to trust Him.  
To praise Him is to trust Him.  
To find strength in Him is to trust Him.  
To pilgrimage after Him is to trust Him.  
To pray to Him is to trust Him.  
To accept being a janitor in heaven is to trust Him.

**Conclusion:** Jesus said in Luke 24 that all of Scripture points to Him. Understanding this psalm Christologically is both right and rich! It leads us to pursue Him and to trust Him even more.

- 1) You see Jesus is the true tabernacle (John 1:14) and temple of God (John 2:21).  
Indeed in the new heaven we learn in Rev. 21:22, “But I saw no temple in it, For the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are its temple.” Vs. 23 adds, “The Lamb is its Light.”
- 2) “Temple Jesus” is truly lovely (vs. 1), and our soul should long, even faint for Him. Our heart and flesh should cry out for the living God, the One that Rev. 1:18 records as saying, “I am He who lives, and was dead, and behold, I am alive forevermore. Amen! And I have the keys of Hades and of Death.” (v. 2)
- 3) It is in Christ we find strength and we can do all things (v. 5).
- 4) It is Christ who is our shield and protector, who is the Lord’s anointed (v. 9).
- 5) It is Christ who is our sun and shield, the Lord through whom we receive grace and glory (v. 11).
- 6) It is Christ who is the Lord of armies, the Lord Almighty of vs. 1, 3, 8, and 12 who fights our battles and wins our salvation: He is my King and my God of v. 3.  
He is King Jesus!