

Better is One Day In Your Courts Than Thousands Elsewhere

Psalm 84

Introduction:

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.

Derek Kidner says, “longing is written all over this psalm... not unlike that of Psalms 42 and 43.”

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.

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”

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. Now, however, He dwells preeminently in Jesus Christ (cf. John 2:19). The Lord also makes His place of dwelling the Church (1 Cor. 3:16) and the Christian (1 Cor. 6:19).

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 pires, even faints for the place where God reveals Himself.

- Both his heart and flesh cry out.
- Psalm 42:1 is a fitting complement to this verse.

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). Swallows were restless. Yet when it came time to bear and care for their young, they found a home near their Creator, near the King.
- Question: are you as smart as these birds?!

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

- Here is the 1st 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.
- Having pined, even panted after the Lord, they will continually (still, ever), be praising you.

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

- This section commences with the 2nd 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. Zion was the Temple hill, Jehovah’s place. Sometimes it stood for the whole city of Jerusalem.

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).
- 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.

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

- “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.
- 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. (cf. Phil. 3:12-14).

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 a God who is faithful even when we are faithless.

1) Seek Him in prayer. 84:8

- Vs. 8 is another excellent example of Hebrew semantic parallelism.
- *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.

2) See His defense. 84:9

- Verse 9 is again parallel poetry.
- 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 2 Samuel 7:13. Once again Psalm 2 cast its mammoth shadow over this song.
- 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

- These are 3 of the most beautiful and comforting Scriptures in all of the Bible.

1) Approach the Lord humbly. 84:10

- 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. But don't forget Psalm 23:6!

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.

This is the Romans 8:28 of the Old Testament.

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).

Conclusion: Jesus said in Luke 24 that all of Scripture points to Him. Understanding this psalm

Christologically is both right and rich!

- 1) You see Jesus is the true tabernacle (John 1:14) and temple of God (John 2:21). See also Rev. 21:22.
- 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 of Rev. 1:18.
- 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.