

Psalm 84:1-12 ¹ To the chief Musician upon Gittith, A Psalm for the sons of Korah. How amiable are thy tabernacles, O LORD of hosts! ² My soul longeth, yea, even fainteth for the courts of the LORD: my heart and my flesh crieth out for the living God. ³ Yea, the sparrow hath found an house, and the swallow a nest for herself, where she may lay her young, even thine altars, O LORD of hosts, my King, and my God. ⁴ Blessed are they that dwell in thy house: they will be still praising thee. Selah. ⁵ Blessed is the man whose strength is in thee; in whose heart are the ways of them. ⁶ Who passing through the valley of Baca make it a well; the rain also filleth the pools. ⁷ They go from strength to strength, every one of them in Zion appeareth before God. ⁸ O LORD God of hosts, hear my prayer: give ear, O God of Jacob. Selah. ⁹ Behold, O God our shield, and look upon the face of thine anointed. ¹⁰ For a day in thy courts is better than a thousand. **I had rather be a doorkeeper in the house of my God, than to dwell in the tents of wickedness.** ¹¹ For the LORD God is a sun and shield: the LORD will give grace and glory: no good thing will he withhold from them that walk uprightly. ¹² O LORD of hosts, blessed is the man that trusteth in thee.

- This is a pilgrim psalm, sung as the ancient Israelites journeyed from the surrounding lowlands up to Jerusalem to keep the festivals at the Temple. Families journeyed together, making bands which grew at each stopping place; they camped together, sang in unison along the roads, toiled together over the rough places, and as they went along, stored up happy and unforgettable memories.
- The psalm is comprised of three parts, marked by the pauses of the musicians (“selah”):

THE EXPECTATION OF THE ACT OF WORSHIP (v. 1-4)

- The temple was comprised of many courts and portions; the writer loved every part of it! That is why the word “tabernacles” is plural (v. 1). How lovely is each part of a true worship service!
- What made the original tabernacle of Moses lovely was not the outside, but the inside.
- This psalm is not the song of someone who merely attends worship services, but of one whose heart’s cry is for fellowship with God (v. 2). The writer even envies the small birds who make their nests in the buildings adjacent to the temple, because they get to dwell near the altar (v. 3).
- To come and go from God’s house brings refreshing, but to dwell in God’s house (v. 4) brings the blessing of God. Communion is the mother of adoration (“they will be still praising thee”).
- All Aaron’s sons were priests by birth, but only some of them were priests by consecration. If one was not sure that his sins had been dealt with, he would be afraid to enter into God’s presence.

THE EXPEDITION TO THE PLACE OF WORSHIP (v. 5-8)

- The blessedness of worship belongs not to the half-hearted and listless, but to those who throw their energies into it (v. 5). Pilgrims had to bring their heart as well as their body to Jerusalem!
- *If you wish to know the extent of your Christianity, put your finger on the pulse of your desires. Words can be counterfeited, so can actions, but desires cannot! Do you desire God?*
- Baca (v. 6) is a play on words. The Arabic “**baka’a**” means “**to be sparsely watered**” while the Hebrew “**baka**” means “**to weep**” or “**balsam tree**” (because the sap “weeps” out of the tree). It may or may not have been an actual valley located on the way to Jerusalem, but one thing is certain – Baca represents an experience of drought (and thus, weeping).
- But where there was no water from below, there was an abundant supply from above (“the rain also filleth the pools”), making it possible for the pilgrims in the valley to “make it a well.” A pathway which would have otherwise been deserted was made into a highway well accommodated for the next traveler simply because God’s people had been through the valley and stored up His blessings!
- Instead of being fatigued by the tediousness and difficulty of their journey, these pilgrims got more lively and cheerful the nearer they got to Jerusalem (v. 7 - “they go from strength to strength”).
- The cry of the writer (v. 2) is repeated once again (v. 8) – he can hardly wait to get to the Temple.

THE EXALTATION OF THE OBJECT OF WORSHIP (v. 9-12)

- “Thine anointed” (v. 9) refers to the nation’s prayer for protection upon their beloved King David, who is regularly described this way in the Psalms.
- *“Every word of God is pure: he is a shield unto them that put their trust in him.”* (Proverbs 30:5)
- We pray, not FOR our King, but TO our King – Jesus! Just to look upon the face of the Anointed One is a blessing. (“Turn your eyes upon Jesus ... and the things of earth will grow strangely dim”)
- A day in the presence of God is better than a thousand spent elsewhere! Not a year, month or week, but a day. The very least portion of God is greater than the greatest portion of the world.
- Your worst day in the church is better than your best years in the world! (v. 10)

I had rather be a doorkeeper in the house of my God, than to dwell in the tents of wickedness.

- This phrase can be understood in three basic ways from the original language:

1. The gate was the furthest extremity of the Temple – A POSITION OF HUMILITY

- *“I would choose rather to sit at the threshold ...”*
- The doorkeeper has only the faintest glimpse of the temple glories, hears the least of its music, tastes little of its delicacies; yet the psalmist is more content on the doorstep than in the world!
- Even a glimpse of Jesus is better than ages spent serving the pleasures of the world.

2. The doorkeepers indicated here were sons of Korah – A POSITION OF GRACE

- *“I had rather be a doorkeeper ...”*
- From the introduction to this Psalm, we understand that it was “for the sons of Korah”
- Their ancestor Korah was the one who led the rebellion against Moses in Numbers 16.
- Korah was jealous because the honors of the priesthood had been given exclusively to Aaron.
- He felt that his service in the Tabernacle was inferior, so he rebelled with Dathan and Abiram.
- The earth opened and swallowed them; fire went out from God and consumed 250 others.
- The next morning 14,700 members of the murmuring congregation were destroyed by plague.
- Korah’s sons later became prominent in the Levitical service, so they had obviously separated themselves from their father’s jealous act of rebellion. They had an attitude of gratitude!
- They were happy to bear burdens and open doors for the Lord in appreciation of His mercy!

3. The doorkeepers could not move from their station – A POSITION OF LOVE

- *“I would rather be fixed to a post in the house of my God, than live at liberty ...”*
- This statement alludes to the ancient law concerning servants in Exodus 21:5-6.
- If they did not desire to leave the Master’s house, they had their ear bored to the doorpost.
- They were – figuratively and literally – forever tied to the Master’s house and a place of service.
- The writer of this psalm preferred bonds of duty far over the greatest liberty among the wicked.

Our english phrase “siren song” comes from ancient Greek mythology. Sirens were a group of creatures also known as “sea nymphs” having the head of a woman and the body of a bird. They had voices of such sweetness that mariners who heard their songs were lured to destruction on the rocks where they sang. The Greek hero Odysseus was able to pass their island with safety only because he stopped the ears of his companions with wax and had himself firmly lashed to the mast of his ship so he could not follow them. Hence, a “siren song” is an alluring or seductive appeal, especially one that is deceptive.

- WE MUST FIX OURSELVES TO A POST OF HOLINESS TO AVOID THE WORLD’S APPEAL.

- YOUR RIGHTEOUSNESS IS A BENEFIT TO YOU, NOT TO GOD!
 - **Job 22:3** *Is it any pleasure to the Almighty, that thou are righteous? or is it gain to him, that thou makest thy ways perfect?*
 - **Job 35:7** *If thou be righteous, what givest thou him? or what receiveth he of thine hand?*

For the Lord God is a sun and shield: the LORD will give grace and glory: no good thing will he withhold from them that walk uprightly. (v. 11)

- As a sun, the Lord shows me more of my sinfulness; as a shield, he gives me power to oppose it.
- As a sun, he illuminates the enormity of my guilt; as a shield, he shows me his covering of mercy.
- If God were not both a sun and a shield, my situation would be hopeless; but seeing He is both, the disclosures he makes as a sun only prepare me for the blessings which he imparts as a shield.
- As a sun, God shows me MYSELF; as a shield, He shows me HIMSELF.
- The only things God withholds from His people are those things which could do them harm.
- When it seems God is withholding something good from us, we trust that He has a higher purpose.
- The best things in life (righteousness, peace, joy in the Holy Ghost) are never given to the wicked!

O LORD of hosts, blessed is the man that trusteth in thee. (v. 12)

- No formal worshipper understands this intense desire for God! Only a life of trust is truly blessed.

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