

At Home In The Father's House

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- [0 : 01] Well, this morning we are taking a break now from Exodus, and we're going to be looking at Psalm 84 this morning. And if you have a Bible, perhaps, please turn to Psalm 84.
- If not, we're going to have it on the screen. And it's good that we've been singing that song, Praise the Lord, all ye servants of the Lord.
- We were doing that again on Wednesday, and yet you had no idea that I was going to be in Psalm 84 because I failed to tell you. But it just fits perfectly. It fits perfectly. And so let me read.
- Let me pray and then read from Psalm 84. Our loving Heavenly Father, you have not left us alone in the dark. You have never left us without a witness to your faithfulness.
- And so we thank you for your Word. We thank you for your people throughout generations who knew the works of your hands, who were given the oracles of God, to whom you chose as a light to the nations.
- [1 : 30] We thank you for those who have been faithful to you and those who have recorded the truth that has come through them through your Spirit.
- And so as we open your Word, please speak to us. Please impress your truth and your Word upon our hearts by your Spirit. And please be glorified in our midst.
- We pray in Jesus' name. Amen. Psalm 84. To the choir master according to the Gitteth, a psalm of the sons of Korah.
- How lovely is your dwelling place, O Lord of hosts! My soul longs, yes, faints 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 her young at your altars, O Lord of hosts! My King and my God, blessed are those who dwell in your house, ever singing your praises.
- [2 : 42] 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. O Lord God of hosts, hear my prayer.
- 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.
- [3 : 41] Amen. Amen. Well, where is it that you long to be right now? I imagine probably not here. Where is it you long to be and why?
- As a child, I would love to visit other people's houses, friends' houses. If there was an opportunity to stay somewhere else, I would not hesitate. I would invite myself to stay at other people's houses.

Sometimes you enjoy these things because your friends have things that you don't have. Maybe it was a color television. Maybe it was a pet. Maybe it was an upstairs. Maybe a bunk bed.

Who knows? In fact, not just as a child. I love visiting other people's houses. I love seeing what style of furniture they have, what decor they have, what the rooms are like, what books are on the shelves, what pictures are on the walls.

The psalmist wants to go to the house of God. Not just because God's house would obviously be impressive. I mean, imagine the size of the sofa or the bed in God's house.

[4 : 51] No, he wants to go to the house of God because that is where God would be. That's why he wants to go. It's not because it was an impressive place, though it was. He longs to be with God where God dwells.

You see, home, wherever it is, is not meant to be simply geographical. It's supposed to be relational. And again, I know that we go through periods where the place that we call home may not include other people.

But beyond the comforts and safety of that place, think of where your heart is. It's like that saying that Agnes and many of you said earlier, home is where the heart is.

And so what relationships make you feel at home? Home is with those you consider family. Who is that? What does that feel like?

Do you feel at home here among your brothers and sisters? Where do you feel at home? Where is it you long to be? And who do you long to be with? And so this psalm, this psalm takes us on the journey of one who longs to be with God.

[6 : 01] And the main point of the psalm, if there was a main point, the main point of this psalm is the blessedness of being with God.

It's a song about what it really means to be blessed. And therefore, who is the one who is actually blessed? You see, you might hear people in the world talking about being blessed, being blessed with this and that, or because you have this and that.

Talking about the things that make life good and happy. You may also wonder in your own heart whether those things would make your life good and happy. And therefore, you may even find yourself longing for some of the things in the world.

But the psalm reminds us what it really means to be blessed. The psalm shows us whose life is actually good and happy. Even the doorkeeper is happier.

To be a servant in God's house is greater than being a king elsewhere. And so we see this focus of blessedness because there's three sections in this psalm.

[7 : 13] You'll see that, the word selah. There's three sections, three movements, three verses in musical terms of this psalm. And in each of the three sections, there's a key line in each section that concludes both who is blessed and what it is to be blessed.

So in the first section, the key line is verse 4. Blessed are those who dwell in your house, ever singing your praise. In the second section, the key verse is verse 5.

Blessed are those whose strength is in you, and whose heart are the highways to Zion. And in the final section, the key verse is verse 12. Blessed is the one who trusts in you.

You see that? Blessed, blessed, blessed. This is what it means to be blessed. This is what it looks like. This is who is blessed. Blessed is the one who trusts in you. It's actually the way that the whole entire book of the Psalms begins.

Psalm 1, verse 1. Blessed is the one who... And so the book of Psalms is telling you what it means to be blessed. Who are the ones who are actually blessed?

[8 : 21] If you look out there in the world and the wicked prosper, and you suffer, and you think to yourself, who is it that is actually blessed? The Psalms remind us who is blessed, and what it really means to be blessed.

And so we're going to look at each of these three sections, and we're going to allow these key verses and this theme of blessedness to guide how we understand and apply this psalm.

The first section, what belonging in God looks like. The second section, what strength in God looks like. And the final section, what trust in God looks like.

And so, verses 1 to 4, what belonging in God looks like. Spurgeon says of this in his great, The Treasury of David.

He says that, talking about the person in the psalm who longs for God, he says, His heart and flesh cry out, not for the altar or the candlestick, but for his God.

[9 : 21] And how often did Israel need to be reminded of what it really meant to be blessed? It wasn't that they had a land or a nation or favor. It was that they had God.

They had God. That's what it really means to be blessed. It's no blessing to only desire the gifts and not the giver. How often do we need reminded of that too?

Is this not why in verse 4 he is blessed? Not because he loves the dwelling place itself. Not because of the magnificent stones. Not because he takes pride in the house of God.

But because he loves and longs for his God in whom the dwelling place belongs. If you are longing for anything less, you will be sorely disappointed.

If you are looking to any of these things to do what only God can do, you will be dissatisfied. And so, coming to the dwelling place, if it is for the Lord that you come, you will be satisfied.

[10 : 26] But if it is for something else, some expectation of the place itself, the building, the fellow pilgrims, if it's the way the servants serve in the house of God, if it's the forms of prayer and praise, whatever it may be, if it's not God himself, as lovely as the stones and candlesticks are, in the end we will only be disappointed.

Because our hearts are not set on him. But if your heart is set on him and himself, then you will see his graces in all of the other things.

And it will cause you to look and find him. And so, let me also say this. That this was true when this psalm was written. This was true then.

It was true in Jesus' day. It was true in Moses' day with the tabernacle. It's been true ever since. That there can be people, and there have been people, in the temple, yet not be blessed because their heart is elsewhere.

Is this not true today as well? We have a book, this Bible, we have a book full of people who visited the temple every year. Yet not every one of them knew the blessing because not everyone's heart was actually on God.

[11 : 48] For some people, their heart was elsewhere. And so, even in the church, right, in the church, the church is not this building. This building is not the house of God.

There was one place that was called the house of God. That was the temple in Jerusalem. This building is not the house of God. The church is not the building yet.

Paul says in 2 Corinthians 6 that we, the people of Jesus, we are the temple of the living God. And then Paul quotes Leviticus 26, 12, and he says, As God said, I will make my dwelling among them and walk among them, and I will be their God, and they shall be my people.

Paul, Paul's saying this about the church in Corinth and the church. He's saying this about the people of Jesus. This temple language and Garden of Eden language, Paul applies and says is fulfilled through Jesus.

Likewise, in Ephesians 2, 22, he says, In him we are being built together into a dwelling place for God by the Spirit. And so, it's true today.

[12 : 58] You can be in the assembly of his people and still find no blessing. And if that's the case, perhaps it's because your heart is elsewhere. All the while, someone far away who doesn't get the opportunity to be among the people.

The pilgrim traveling on the journey can be blessed, though he's not there, because his heart is longing for God. This can be true of people as well now. Think of someone like, say, Agnes Gunning, you know.

Though she is not among the people, can still be blessed, because her heart is set on God. And so, with Christ, we are home.

These three descriptions of who is blessed is really talking about the one whose heart is presently set on God. It's an ongoing thing.

We get so easily distracted, myself included, a lot. If your heart is not set on Christ, then you will never find blessing or home.

[14 : 06] If you're only wanting the benefits of the house, but not the God of the house, you will only be disappointed in the end. And even for those who follow Jesus, at times our hearts can be elsewhere.

We are prone to wander, and our hearts can be elsewhere. And when that is the case, we do not find it a blessing to walk the path. And if we're going through a season where we don't find it a blessing to walk this path, if we don't find it a blessing to be among the pilgrims, then perhaps our heart is struggling to be set on God.

And we need reminded by this psalm to lift our eyes and lift our heart to God. We may be dwelling on other things. We may be dwelling on the pilgrims beside us and the little annoying habits that they have, and we do have them.

Many annoying habits. Maybe we're dwelling on that, and we should be dwelling on the place that we're journeying towards. Maybe we should be rejoicing and joyful for those who are with us on this arduous journey.

Maybe we're dwelling on the bumps in the path. Maybe we're dwelling on the weather that's beating down on us. And I can understand that. Maybe we're dwelling on the fact that we have to travel in the first place.

[15 : 27] I can understand that. But we've all probably been through this. These things bear down on us. But at the end of the day, we need to see this journey differently.

If we see this journey as taking us away from home, then we will never be happy. We will only see it as a loss. But if we see this journey as a journey towards home, we are journeying towards home, brothers and sisters.

We are heading home. It's good. It's a good thing. I'm sure you know what that's like to be heading home. And the weather's beating down, blasting down, but you don't mind because you know I'm going to be home soon.

I can take this wet soaking jacket off. I can change my clothes. I can get a warm bath. I can cuddle up with the person next to me. I can find comfort and home and safety.

We know what it's like. We are journeying towards home. And if we see this journey as a journey towards home, then we won't grow weary.

[16 : 32] We will press on. And for the joy set before us, we will endure the weather on the way. What do you really long for? When was the last time that your heart and flesh sang for joy?

When was the last time your soul longed, even fainted for something, for anything? Where is your heart? I want to take us on a journey through time to 1963.

Depending on where you lived, many notable things happened that year. There were earthquakes and storms across the world. 11,500 people died in Bangladesh in a cyclone.

Kenya gained independence from Britain in December of 63. 2.6 million pound was stolen from a Royal Mail train from Glasgow to London.

The great train robbery. Russia sent the first women into space. I'm sure she was glad to get home. Martin Luther King delivered his famous speech.

[17 : 34] I have a dream. Robert F. Kennedy ordered Alcatraz to be closed. Pope John died of stomach cancer. And you will perhaps remember that the U.S. President John F. Kennedy was assassinated.

These are all serious and significant events. But they've got nothing to do with this, Sam. The event that I'm thinking about, the thing that I'm thinking about in 1963, is a thing, and some of you here might not know this, was a thing called Beatlemania.

Beatlemania is ridiculous. This was a term coined for the intense fan frenzy of the English rock band, the Beatles. I don't like the Beatles, just FYI.

But this was a real thing. There was such frenzy that people were literally fainting at concerts. Overcome with emotion and excitement, the crowds had reached fever pitch.

They weren't fainting watching them on TV, but the anticipation, the journey to go see the Beatles, the build-up to seeing them in person, close enough to touch.

[18 : 41] They might hear you scream. They might even glance at you. People were desperate to see them, to be near to them, to be with the Beatles where they were.

So much so, they were fainting. I mean, let us never be outdone by fans of the Beatles. Is that how you feel about Christ?

It's a challenge, isn't it? People were literally fainting over this. But do you long for Jesus? Do you long for your God with great anticipation, greater than those who were going to a Beatle concert?

When was the last time your heart and flesh sang for joy? When was the last time your soul longed, even fainted? This psalm anticipates this pilgrim thinking about this.

And as the pilgrim is journeying and thinking about being in the house of God with God, while he's far off, he even gets jealous of little birds.

[19 : 46] Oh, to even be a sparrow, to be a sparrow so that I could be in the house of my God and my King. That's what he's thinking. If I were a sparrow to be in the house of my God and my King.

My dad was always really into nature. He was into it. I couldn't tell you what a sparrow was, but he could. He was a park ranger for a time in Loch Lomond.

And he had these little books. You know, he had a book about trees and a book about birds. Never far away from a pair of binoculars. And I found this dreadfully boring.

I mean, who actually owns a book about trees? Who actually reads a book about trees? Well, I mean, you're in good company.

I must confess, I am becoming my dad. I've got books. I've got these books about trees. I'm becoming my dad. If these little birds, like sparrows, are welcomed and find a home in the house of God, how much more will those who long to be with God be welcomed in?

[20 : 59] How much more will we find a home with God? If sparrows are cared for by God, and yet they are sold too for a penny, Jesus says, you are worth more to him than many sparrows.

Will he not welcome those who love him and long to be with him? You will find your home with God. And so the point is that those who are blessed are those who dwell in the house of God, ever singing his praises.

And therefore, the application is, make that your goal. And life, make that the thing that you long for. Make that your goal, to be with God in his house, to sing his praises evermore.

Paul says in Philippians 1, 23, my desire, he says, my desire is to depart and be with Christ, for that's far better. 2 Corinthians 5, he says, isn't it true, Christians, we would rather be away from the body and at home with the Lord.

But whether we're at home or away, we make it our aim to please him. If you're going to dwell on anything, dwell on the fact that in the Father's house, there are many rooms.

[22 : 15] Dwell on the promise that Jesus made that he is preparing a place for you. And if he's preparing a place, he will come back and take us to himself that we may be where he is also.

But going home, it's a good thing. He isn't preparing the furniture. He isn't dusting the shelves and fluffing the cushions. That's not what he means by preparing a place.

He went to prepare a place by going to the cross for us. That's how he prepared a place for us. Because how else would we have a place?

We would never have a place if it were not for that. God's own son went to the cross to prepare a place for me and you. So make being with him where he is your ultimate goal.

Paul says that his goal is to know Christ. Not that he's already obtained this or is perfect, but that he presses toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God and Christ Jesus.

[23 : 23] Make that your goal. Secondly, blessed is the one whose strength is in him and whose heart are the highways to Zion. This is what strength in God looks like.

Because how else will you get through? How else will you endure? What will stop you from turning back? Do we feel at times like turning back? We do. Boy, we do.

It gets hard on this road. What is going to stop you from leaving this pilgrimage altogether? Because many have. And I'm sure every one of us here could think of someone that we know who at some time was on this same journey with us.

I reckon we've all been beside someone who seemed to be on this same road, but at some point, something happened and they turned back. This pilgrimage was no more for them.

Perhaps the reason was that they weren't walking in the strength of the Lord. They were walking in their own strength. And though they were on the way, the way was not in their heart.

[24 : 25] If the way is not in your heart, you won't make it through the valley. Blessed are those whose hearts, and whose hearts are the way. See, Spurgeon again says this.

He says, there's no necessary blessedness in visiting tabernacles and temples. That's not what it means to be blessed, that you would visit these wonderful places. Unless you're going there to meet God, you will be disappointed.

Unless you're going because you long to appear before God, you won't find sufficient reason to keep going. The pilgrim is not relying on his own strength.

The strength of God will get us there. The pilgrim's often weak, and the road isn't smooth, but God strengthens us by His sufficient grace for us to persevere.

And though we may be weak and prone to wander, our hearts have been turned toward Him like a compass for the way. You see, this is true.

[25 : 26] Thomas asked, how can we know the way? And Jesus replied, I am the way. No one, you see, no one can come to the Father except through Jesus.

He is the way, and so is the way in your heart. Blessed are those whose strength is in you and whose heart is the way.

Is the way in your heart. Not just that you know the way, but that the way is ever present in your heart. Trust in His strength and have your heart set on Him as the way. Only then will you make it through the valley of Baca.

The valley of Baca was a place of weeping, a place of trial. Only then will we make it through the valley and reach our destination.

You see, Paul says in 2 Corinthians, we don't lose heart. Our outer self is wasting away, but our inner self is being renewed day by day.

[26 : 26] From strength to strength, says the psalm in verse 7. We are being renewed day by day. This light momentary affliction is preparing for us an eternal weight of glory beyond all comparison as we look not to the things that are seen, but to the things that are unseen.

For the things that are seen are transient, they pass away, but the things that are unseen are eternal. That's what strength in God looks like. That's what longing to be home with the Lord looks like.

And so the psalmist says, O Lord God of hosts, hear my prayer. Give ear, O God of Jacob. Will he not answer you? And the psalmist then leads the pilgrim in prayer to God, considering our arrival.

The third section, Behold our shield, O God. Look on the face of your anointed. This is what trust in God looks like. That God would look on the face of the king.

We don't rely on God looking on our face. God would look on the face of the king, our anointed king. That's all our longing, our journey, our arrival, our welcome, would be accepted on the basis of the anointed king, the Messiah, the Lord Jesus Christ.

[27 : 44] The favor of God upon the people depended on how God looked on the face of his anointed king. God would be kind and gracious to his king, and thus his people, if the king is faithful, and our king is faithful.

If you know who Jesus really is and what his kingdom will be, then you know that a day in his court is better than a thousand elsewhere.

You will know that it's far greater to be a doorkeeper in the house of our God than dwell in the tents of wickedness. What does it look like to trust in God?

Well, it looks like this, that you would get more pleasure out of standing at the door of God's house than you would in the richest mansion indulging in the company of the famous. You would get more pleasure out of spending one day with Christ in his Father's house than spending a thousand days elsewhere and anywhere the world can offer.

Paradise isn't the Maldives. Heaven on earth isn't some fancy paradise island. It is in God's house where he is.

[29 : 02] There's nothing good that he will withhold. There is nothing good that he will withhold. He is a sun and shield. Spurgeon says the Christian still finds both light and shelter in the Lord his God.

A sun for happy days and a shield for dangerous ones. A sun above and a shield around. A light to show the way and a shield to ward off the perils. You see, back in Jeremiah chapter 5 it says, Your sins have kept good from you.

That's what's keeping good from you, your sins. However, in Christ he withholds no good thing. For it says in Ephesians that in Christ we have every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places.

In him we receive forgiveness of sin. In him we're adopted as sons and daughters. In him we have eternal life and a place in his kingdom forever. Unless you trust in him you won't find him to be your sun and shield.

Though he is that to those who trust him. You'll not find favor and honor in the tents of the wicked. You won't find it there. You won't find blessing in the tents of wickedness.

[30 : 16] Unless you trust in him and walk up rightly you'll not find him to be ever good. But the greatest of these good things that he does not withhold is himself.

If it seems like the wicked prosper we must remember that God withholds no good thing from those who walk up rightly. So the things that the wicked have must not actually be good for their soul or even their body.

If it seems like God is withholding something from us then we must see that it must not be good for us. If he is withholding it it must not be good at that particular time or at all.

For God does not withhold any good things. And how do we know? How do we know that he does not withhold any good thing? Because not only is he himself the source of all that is good but he did not withhold his very own son.

And that was why we were enemies. He did not withhold his very own son. If he did not withhold his own beloved son from us then will he withhold any good thing from us?

[31 : 27] Should we withhold trust in him? It's not a loss to trust in Christ. It's not a loss. It is truly what it means to be blessed.

Blessed is the one who trusts in you. What a happy state we have when we trust in God. We now meet the Father through Jesus. We dwell with the Father in his house through Jesus.

John said in Revelation 21 that he saw no temple in the city for its temple was the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb. The city had no need of sun or moon to shine on it for the glory of God gives it light and its lamp is the Lamb.

He is our temple. He is our home. He is making a home for us within his kingdom to be with him where he is in his father's house.

And while we're on this journey towards him he gives us this promise in John 14 before he comes back to take us with him where he is he says this if anyone loves me he will keep my word and my father will love him and we we will come to him and make our home with him.

[32 : 44] Amen. Only by trust in the Lord not ourselves or our fellow pilgrims but only by trust in the Lord will you know this blessing. But as fellow pilgrims let us stir one another up in our longing for Christ our King and our God.

Let us faint with excitement. Let us stir one another up to think on this welcome home that we will have. We can expect this welcome home when we trust in him.

I don't know when the last time you had a fanfare welcoming you home. Do you know I used to enjoy going home from work? I still do. Sorry.

I should say I still do. But when the boys are little when children are little the welcome that they give you when you turn up you come home.

Like do you know how much your father loves you? Do you know the kind of welcome that you will receive when you get home? More joyful than you can ever imagine.

[33 : 53] the welcome home we can expect when we trust in him and we sing together our happy song of salvation in him.

What joy there will be in his presence and at his glory. What joy. And while we're on this arduous path, let us encourage one another to think of all that we long for.

And not just all that we long for, but all that we're heading towards, and we are heading towards it. And even if we're going through a valley, the valley's transient. We will make it through. We will make it home.

If even the sparrows find a way home in the temple, then we will make it home. Will the Lord not see to it? It is in his strength. He will bring us home.

Let us long to be with him where he is. Let us dwell on our home with him as we travel along this path. Just as Jesus himself said that he was going back to the Father, let us know in our hearts that he is the way.

[34 : 58] Trust in Jesus, the shield, the anointed king, and you will be safe. And as the Father looks upon the face of his beloved son, those who trust in Christ shall be blessed and welcomed home like a son or daughter in the Father's house.

Hallelujah. Amen. Well, let me pray and let us sing together. O God, what hope we have. What hope we have through your word.

What hope we have through your promise. What hope we have through your goodness. What hope we have through your son. Stir us up to know this hope that we have together.

That we might long for you and we might find that such a blessing. For that is what it truly means to be blessed. To long for you, to dwell in your house with you, to ever sing your praises, to find strength in you, to find the way in you, to trust in you and to be at home with you where you are.

Lord, we are looking forward to that and we thank you for it. for Jesus opening the way. In his name we pray. Amen.