

# Psalm 84

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Preacher: Jerome Peirson

[0:00] Well, welcome to our Sunday evening service here at Calvary Evangelical Church.! My name's Jerome and I'm a member here at the church.! Here at Calvary, we seek to be a Christ-centered church, a God-honoring church, and a Bible-loving and Bible-based church. We're an independent evangelical church based in Brighton, Sussex.

Now, if it's the first time you've come across our online services or sermons, it's great that you're here and it's great that you're viewing this and I hope that this will spiritually encourage you, help you, build you up and challenge you. We put much emphasis on simplicity of worship and what Christians throughout all the ages have called the ordinary means of grace.

So we put great emphasis on the preached word, we put emphasis on the sacraments of the Lord's Supper and baptism and prayer and singing psalms, hymns and spiritual songs and loving discipleship.

You can listen to other sermons on our Calvary Church YouTube channel. Our pastor, Philip Wells, is going through a series in Hebrews in the morning.

And we're so grateful and blessed because we're starting to gather as a church in person in the mornings and we so hope and pray that in the future we can open up our evening meetings.

[1:27] Now, it's our usual practice to preach through a Bible book and we're currently doing a little series in preaching through select psalms and we'll be looking tonight at Psalm 84.

But before we look at tonight's psalm, let's bow our heads and still our minds in prayer. Let's come before the Lord. Father, we come before you and we confess our help is in the name of the Lord who made heaven and earth.

We thank you that you are our creator, God. You have formed us from the dust. You're intimately aware of our frames. You knitted us in our mother's wombs.

And we're awed of how you've brought all things into being. We marveled at the beauty and the complexity of your creation, Lord. We thank you so much for your sustaining and upholding power. The way you govern providence and so not a molecule is out of your control. And not a sparrow falls to the ground without your sovereign and perfect decree ordaining it.

[2:37] We thank you, Father, for your redeeming grace and power to save lost, rebellious, recalcitrant, hateful sinners. And the miracle of turning stony hearts, our stony hearts, to hearts of flesh, to soft hearts.

Oh, Lord, please forgive us our sins. And through the powerful working of your spirit, change us to be more like Christ.

We pray, Lord, for the cause of the gospel in this nation. We so long to see the growth of biblical and faithful gospel churches.

We particularly commit to you tonight the partnership between the gospel, the Grace Baptist churches and New Life in Morskoon.

We just commit that whole matter to you, Father. And we pray that you would bless them, that you would provide for them. And that you would grow them and build them.

[3:41] And you would prosper them, Lord. We pray for your favour over that. And we pray, Lord, for the continued opening up of society. We're so grateful that we're seeing more freedoms and we're having the opportunity to gather.



And it's in Christ's matchless and strong name that we pray. Amen. I wonder what you think when I say the word home.

For many of us home has been a significant feature in our lives due to the pandemic and due to being in lockdown.

We've been forced to spend more and more time at home. And for many of us we may have been longing to actually get away from our homes and to get out into the wider world.

For some of us home may be a place where we don't really feel that real sense of permanence. We don't really feel a place of rootedness.

[13:10] And we may long to be somewhere else. It's not where we really want to be. Home should be a place of safety, security, belonging.

The place you want to spend your time. I think we will all know at a time in our lives the feeling of not being at home.

Or being far from home and that sense of yearning. That sense of longing and that aching to be home.

Well, you can tell a lot about a person by where they want to spend their time and where they feel most at home.

Psalm 84 is a psalm that speaks of the pilgrim's desire and yearning to be at home with his God.

[14:08] It's the yearning desire in the heart of God's people to fellowship with their God and the people he has set apart as his church.

It's a hungering, it's a thirsting to be in God's presence in his house and to experience his blessings and his favour.

When we consider the grand redemptive plan of the Bible, the story of salvation and the redemption, the history of redemption in many ways.

It's a story of bringing exiles and strangers back home into the fellowship with their God. We see in the opening chapters of Genesis following man's rebellion, man is cast out of the garden.

He's a wanderer. He's a stranger. He's east of Eden. He's out of the blessing. He's out of the favour and the fellowship and presence of God.

[15:14] You could say man is spiritually homeless. This has been man's story ever since the fall. And it's man's plight to this day.

And it always will be. In their banishment from the garden, Adam and Eve, they experienced exile, alienation and displacement.

And with that, they experienced the effects of sin, which one of which is restlessness. The unregenerate sinner is a restless soul seeking and searching for a home, a home to dwell, but they're never, ever satisfied.

Augustine put it so well when he said that the heart of man was created for God and it cannot find its rest until it rests in the heart of God.

There's an unrealised desire in man that can only be satisfied in God. But as well as that, there's a restlessness that the regenerate knows.

[16:30] There's a restlessness that the believer experiences once they've been drawn and once they've been loved by their God and they have that sweet communion.

They want more. There's a sanctified longing and yearning to be in Zion and to be in the dwelling place of God.

This restless heart wants to be with God's people. And this psalm is the heartbeat and the yearning of the pilgrims seeking his home.

Home is where the heart is. Now, the psalm is helpfully divided into three sections or stanzas and divided by this word sealer, which is a kind of musical notes or punctuation.

And I want to simply look at three thoughts tonight. Blessed through dwelling in God's house.

Blessed through pilgrimage to God's house.

[17:32] And blessed through trusting in the Lord. So my first point, blessed through dwelling in God's house. This is a psalm of the sons of Korah.

That the sons of Korah were ordained to take care of the temple courts. They were of the priestly line and office and they took care of the tabernacle and the ark of the covenant.

That the setting of the psalm is uncertain. However, the psalmist is forced to be away from the tabernacles. And some have thought that this could be David as he was fleeing his son, Absalom. We see that this first section is summarized with a beatitude or a blessing at the end of verse four. Blessed are those who dwell in your house, ever singing your praises.

Well, we as Christians use the word blessed a lot. It's common language that we use. But what does it actually mean to be blessed? Well, to be blessed for certain is to be happy.

[18:39] It's it's certainly should include a subjective happiness. Yet being blessed is so much more than just a subjective happiness. It's to know the favor and the smile of God.

It's to know the joy of God's approval and his covenantal benefits in your life. Now, the psalmist opens by describing the central sanctuary of Jerusalem in Jerusalem, God's house.

And he describes it as lovely. The authorized version uses the word amiable. Well, it's lovely because it's the Lord's dwelling place.

The Lord is spelt with capital letters. This is the covenant name given to Yahweh, the name for his dealing with his people in a special relational way.

Now, the house of God is lovely because it's the Lord's dwelling place. But it's also lovely because the God who dwells there is lovely. And here we see the piety of a soul that loves the Lord and longs.

[19:49] Yes, fairs to be in the courts of the Lord. Now, this is a blessing that's bestowed upon those who dwell in the house of the Lord. You notice this little word dwell.

It describes something different to the occasional visit. Dwelling describes something that is settled, something that's permanent, something consistent, something that's committed.

Dwelling points to the exercising of regular habits and being at home somewhere. Now, although no doubt the tabernacle courts would have been beautiful and splendid, full of majesty.

They would have been pleasing to the eye. A building is not just what's in view here. The psalmist is describing the loveliness of the whole experience of fellowship with his God.

The whole experience of being in the house of God and being among the people of God.

[20:57] And this causes us to consider as believers, as new covenant believers. Do we love to be among the people of God? Do we want to be in the house of God on a Sunday?

Now, our building isn't much to look at. It doesn't have the majesty or and splendor of the temple. But it is the gathered people of God where the true beauty is.

Now, I know for many of us getting to churches on a Sunday or being here either virtually or in person is difficult. There may be life commitments and work commitments.

And for many of us with families, it can be difficult getting the children up, getting the family ready, coming to church. It's not always easy and it's not always a trouble free time. But despite the challenges, we should love to come to worship on the Lord's Day.

In verse two, we get a glimpse of the inner emotional life of the pilgrim. He says, even my soul longs. Yes, thanks for the courts of the Lord.

[22:06] My heart and flesh sing for joy to the living God. The psalms strike a beautiful balance of expressing on one hand the emotional life of the believer.

But then on the other hand, they're setting forth doctrinal truths. The Christian life needs to impact both the mind and the emotions. A renewed mind leads to renewed affections.

Here, the psalmist is communicating in his whole person inside and out. He is taken up with the worship of his God. And we think of, for example, Psalm 42 as a deer pants for flowing streams.

So pants my soul for you, oh God. And in verse three, we have this beautiful image of a small and fragile bird finding a home for her and her young at the altars of God.

Now, when reading the psalm, I would often imagine the small birds nesting in the bell tower of an old English cathedral high up. However, if you read the text, it's not that's not what's being described.

[23:21] The bird has found her home at the altars of God. Now, there are generally a couple of ways that this section can be taken.

Some commentators have thought that the psalmist is comparing himself to the birds who are welcomed and who find safety and security and contentedness and a home at the altars of God. One commentator observes how easy it is for animals in general and birds particularly to find a home in this world. And how easy it is for them to find contentment.

But like this family of birds who have found a home and settled content content contentedly in their nest by the altar. The pilgrim is only truly content in the house of God and in the presence of his God.

What a second view is, is that the psalmist is lamenting his absence from the house of God. And he's expressing a kind of a righteous jealousy or a kind of playful envy towards the birds who enjoy a greater privilege to him by being in such close proximity to the altars of God.

[24:39] So he's contrasting their experience with his. Now, this is the sense that I think is more natural to the text. But I think both views can be taken.

If it's true for birds to love to go to God's house, how much more should it be true for us? You notice that they're nesting close to the altar.

The altar in the Old Testament is the old is the place where God meets with man and atonement for sin takes place. Within the tabernacle courts, the altar is where the blood of bulls and of goats is sacrificed.

And God is reconciling his people to him. We have a picture here of the wonderful, wonderful truths of the gospel. Justification through substitutionary atonement.

The forgiveness of sins, reconciliation and peace with God. Now, we know that the blood of bulls and goats doesn't actually take away sin.

[25:46] But this pointed to something greater. This pointed to the coming Messiah. The system of atonement in the Old Testament pointed to the once and for all sacrifice that was made for sinners through Jesus Christ.

People of God, these gospel truths should be a central focus for us in our worship in the new covenant church. As we look at the cross of Christ and the amazing blessings and gifts that we receive through his work.

Well, my second point is blessing through pilgrimage to God's house. And that's verses five to eight. Now, these verses, they describe the blessing that the pilgrim experiences while making the journey to Zion to worship in the sanctuary.

Here we see the journey and the going to the sanctuary. We see that blessed are those whose strength is in you, in whose hearts are the highways to Zion.

Now, the highways are in the heart of the believer. And again, I think the psalmist takes us to the to the inner life of piety here. These this this described those who desire to draw near to God's presence.

[27:09] These aren't literal highways, but a picture of how the journey to Zion flows out of the heart. Now, where are these highways going?

They're going to Zion. Now, some of your versions may not have to Zion at the end of verse five. The ESV does.

And I think the NASB does. But you may notice the word Zion in some version is italicized or it's just not there. The authorized version doesn't have it. The original Hebrew doesn't have to Zion.

This is an addition. However, if you look at verse seven, it confirms that the destination of the pilgrim is Zion.

Now, Zion is the Old Testament location of the Temple Mount. It's the ultimate goal of the believers pilgrimage. Now, in the new covenant, Zion is not just a localized place, but it's the dwelling place of God.

[28:15] It's his presence among his people, the church. One commentator says that here is one who places their happiness in God as their end.

They rejoice in all the ways that lead to him. Notice that the pilgrim strength, it's it's in the Lord. It's not a strength that we possess. We are weak, but he is strong.

If we rely on our own strength. We know that we end up despairing. We end up discouraged. But if we trust in the promises of God.

We know blessing and we know real strength because he's our rock. He's our strength. He's our strong tower. It's God's strength that works in us to make perfect his power in our weakness.

Another commentator suggests that the psalmist sees in his mind streams of worshippers walking to Zion. We're going to sing marching to Zion later.

[29:25] It's that picture of them walking to Zion. And he pictures the strength entering their legs as they walk and as they go. Well, the pilgrim is blessed because his or her strength is in the Lord.

But they're also blessed because they make the Valley of Baca a place of springs. This word Baca, it's slightly mysterious.

Some translations have a valley of tears or a valley of weeping. The Hebrew word Baca is thought by some to mean literally weeping.

Some Bible scholars identify Baca as a certain kind of tree that flourishes in the wilderness. But it's likely that the psalmist is describing a particular place of hardship during pilgrimage.

Maybe somewhere barren, somewhere arid, dry, somewhere dangerous, an inhospitable, dangerous, unwelcoming environment.

[30:28] Church, have we not had our valleys of Baca during this prolonged lockdown? Absence from the Lord's house.

Absence from regular face to face and close fellowship and gathered worship. These things make the Christian walk tougher. The more prone to be tempted and assaulted by the devil.

More likely to feel isolated and spiritually dry. Haven't we had our valley of Baca with the sad losses? The troubles within the church?

Discouragements, disappointments, worries and fears. Things haven't happened the way we'd hoped. Haven't many of us had our own valley of Baca with the personal struggles of being cast down?

Depressed, struggling with difficulties and stresses of life. Dealing with physical, mental and spiritual difficulties, maybe indwelling sin. God allows us to go through these valleys of sorrow so our faith may be tested and strengthened.

[31:42] Notice in the text it says they make it a place of springs. The early rain covers it with pools. They go from strength to strength. Each one appears before God in Zion.

The pilgrim, despite the difficulties and challenges of the valley of Baca, makes it a place of springs. Well, how is it that we make it a place of springs?

Well, we are working out what God is working in us. This isn't a work salvation. This is, we're not working out anything to gain a position with God, but we are working out.

We are making it a place of springs by God's empowering and spirit brought power working through us. As James says, there is blessing in the doing of God's precepts and law.

Even in the valley of Baca. Although we may be cast down and like Paul, we may have our own thorns in the flesh. We carry in our hearts a great hope, a joy and a peace that surpasses understanding.

[32:51] Isaiah 51.3 says, for the Lord comforts Zion. He comforts all her waste places and makes her wilderness like Eden, her desert like the garden of the Lord.

You notice that in verse 8, this is set in the context of prayer. The pilgrim who goes from strength to strength only does so in utter prayerful dependence and with heartfelt cries to the Lord.

Well, my third point is blessed through trusting in the Lord. And that's verses 9 to 12. Verses 9 to 12. So in prayerful communion, the psalmist is asking God to behold our shield and to look on the face of his anointed.

Some have suggested that this is King David exiled during Absalom's rebellion. And that he's actually not alone. The word for anointed, as many of you will know, literally means Messiah.

And we can't help but to think of the messianic implications. Pointing us to Christ. Now, if you think of a shield, the shield is a protective piece of armor.

[34:11] It comes between you and your enemy. The psalmist is asking that God would look upon this shield and the face of the anointed one.

When we think of Christ, he's very much like a shield, isn't he? He's our mediator. He's between us and our holy God. Verse 10 describes the attitude of the one who trusts in their Lord through Christ. Now, the principle here simply describes how the smallest, the smallest of blessings in the house of God far outweigh the greatest of worldly pleasures.

Now, it's easy to read this and it's easy for us to sing it. But do we truly have this attitude ourselves? Often we do not earnestly seek God, but we crave the pleasures of the fleeting world. Now, I think here we see a biblical principle.

[35:15] A principle of giving priority to the things of God. The Bible is full of clear references for the needs of believers to make a clear distinction and separation from the world.

We see here distinction from the ways of wickedness and an allegiance and a preference to the things of God. The Bible is a biblical principle.

I ask you, where do you dwell in your heart and mind? Where are you living in terms of your time and in terms of your energy?

Are you more concerned with prestige, power, worldly gain, entertainment, social media, salacious gossip, political issues, material wealth or advancement?

You fill in the gap. I think this is a very searching text. Now, I was struck when I was preparing this that the level of commitment and zeal that this psalmist shows would be seen today as somewhat weird.

[36:20] I think many, even Christians today might think, steady on, this is a bit full on, a bit over the top. But this should be the response of the pilgrim who knows their God and finds their God to be lovely.

In verse 11, we see the goodness of God as he bestows upon us favor and honor. He's the one who provides and is gracious to us.

Now, the authorized version says he bestows grace and glory rather than favor and honor. This means that God gives grace to those who are trusting in him in this life and walking in his ways to be more like Christ and will eventually in the life to come give glory.

When we see Christ face to face. The covenant Lord of hosts, the Lord of armies is our sun and our shield. What does the sun do?

Well, among other things, the sun is a great light bearer, isn't it? The sun brings light, gives light. How often in the scriptures do we read of the Lord being our light and protection during times of spiritual conflict and difficulty?

[37:44] We need this light. We need this protection in our pilgrimage. Isaiah 60 says that the Lord will be your everlasting light. Again, we can't help but to see the messianic overtones as Christ is our son of righteousness with healing in his wings.

Now, Christ is often spoken of as light. Particularly if you read the Gospel of John, it's a really interesting thing to do to go through the Gospel of John and the epistles of John and look for the references to Christ as being light.

And in John 1, we read the true light which gives light to everyone was coming into the world.

So if we're seeking to make God our home, we will grow in our trust in our reliance upon him and be strengthened by him as our true light.

And as our protection. Well, the psalmist ends with pronouncing another blessing. He says, blessed are those who trust in the Lord.

[38:56] And this is my third and final point. If you like, this is the high point or the pinnacle of the psalm. How can we trust in God?

We started off, didn't we, thinking about a home for God's people. The only way we can truly find a home in God's presence and in his blessings and favour is through Christ.

You think about it, Christ, he left his home, his home with the Father to come and dwell among us in the filth, misery and sin of this world.

John 1 says he dwelt among us, which literally means he tabernacled among us. He's the one of whom it is said, foxes have holes, birds have nests, but the Son of Man has nowhere to lay his head.

Christ left his home and became homeless so we would find a home with God. Now, people of God, the presence of God without Christ is not home.

[40:13] The presence of God without Christ is pure, undiluted wrath. It's alienation, it's isolation.

We all have experienced the feeling of alienation and isolation for moments in our life. It's a fearful thing. But trusting in God, in Christ, in Christ, it's blessing, it's welcome, it's belonging for the

believer.

Because of Christ, we can come with confidence and with boldness and joy. As we close tonight, can you say that the courts of the Lord are where you long to be?

Can you say that God's dwelling place is truly lovely? And can you say that God's dwelling place is truly your home?

Let us make it so. And let us be sure that this home is where our heart is. Amen. Well, let's sing our final hymn this evening, which is Marching to Zion.

[41:24] Come we that love the Lord, and let our joys be known.

Join in a song with sweet accord, join in a song with sweet accord. And thus surround the throne, and thus surround the throne.

Let those refuse to sing, who never knew our God. But children of the heavenly King, but children of the heavenly King, may speak their joys abroad, may speak their joys abroad.

We're marching to Zion, beautiful, beautiful Zion. We're marching upward to Zion, the beautiful city of God.

The God who rules on high, and all the earth surveys. Who rides upon the stormy sky, who rides upon the stormy sky.

[42:40] And comes the roaring seas, and comes the roaring seas. This awesome God is ours, our Father and our love.

He will send down His heavenly powers. He will send down His heavenly powers. To carry us above, to carry us above.

We're marching to Zion, beautiful, beautiful Zion. We're marching upward to Zion, the beautiful city of God.

And we're marching to Zion. Then we shall see His face, and never, never sin. There from the rivers of His grace.

There from the rivers of His grace. Drink endless pleasures in. Drink endless pleasures in. And here before we rise to that immortal state.

[43:48] The thought of such amazing bliss. The thought of such amazing bliss. Should constant joy create. Should constant joy create.

We're marching to Zion. Beautiful, beautiful Zion. We're marching upward to Zion, the beautiful city of God.

His children here found. Glory begun below. And heavenly fruit on earthly ground. And heavenly fruit on earthly ground.

From faith and hope may grow. From faith and hope may grow. Then let our songs abound. And every tear be dry.

We're marching through Emmanuel's ground. We're marching through Emmanuel's ground. To fairer worlds on high. To fairer worlds on high.

[44:56] We're marching to Zion. Beautiful, beautiful Zion. Beautiful, beautiful Zion. We're marching upward to Zion. The beautiful city of God. Now to Him who is able to keep you from stumbling.

And to present you blameless. Before the presence of His glory with great joy. To the only God, our Saviour, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Be glory, majesty, dominion and authority.

Before all time and now and forever. Amen.