

AM Psalm 84

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[0 : 0 0] I'm going to read from the book of Psalms, the book of Psalms and reading in Psalm 84. The book of Psalms in Psalm 84. Let's hear the word of God.

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 her altars. O Lord of hosts, my King and my God, blessed are those who dwell in your house, ever singing your praise.

Blessed are those whose strength is in you, in whose heart are the highways to Zion. As they go through the valley of Beka, 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. Lord God of hosts, hear my prayer. Give ear, O God of Jacob.

[1 : 1 6] 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 a shield. The Lord bestows favour and honour. No good thing does he withhold from those who walk uprightly. O Lord of hosts, blessed is the one who trusts in you.

And then a good praise to God for his perfect inerrant. And the chapter we had in Psalm 84. Psalm 84.

Taking in the whole psalm. This is of course going to be a very brief summarised overview. This psalm, as we'll see in a short while, takes in the whole journey of Christian experience.

So we have a short time to take in the whole of our lives. But as we look at this psalm, I want us really to look at it and then to take the points, as it were, away home with us. The points we look at in this psalm.

[2 : 2 7] To go home today and this afternoon or whenever you have time to look at this psalm again for yourself in your own time. And to see how this psalm points towards our Saviour.

We'll cover a few points today, but in reality there are so many more points in this psalm which we won't even begin to touch on this day. A psalm of life, a psalm of journey. We see that in the psalm itself.

This is a pilgrim psalm written, we see, by the sons of Korah. And I'm almost there, and of course you've covered this before in time. But just a quick summary. Of course the sons of Korah were those who served in the temple.

Who at times, and who the majority of them actually lived in temple, or lived at least in the temple grounds. They spent their whole working lives living and serving God.

The closest we have to a modern day working of it, but it's nowhere near. They were, we could say, almost the deacons of the temple. But of course we know the reality was much more profound than that.

[3 : 27] Their service was lifelong and their service was almost 24-7. And every waking moment they were in the temple, around the temple, serving somehow God at the temple.

So this is a psalm written by those who knew what it was to be close to God's presence. Who knew what it was to serve God every day of their lives. Now the psalmist in this psalm, for whatever reason he is, it seems at least to us, he's away from the temple for a while and he's heading back towards the temple.

He's making, as it were, a pilgrimage towards the temple. And here he is on this pilgrimage. To go through this psalm, to journey through it, we see the reality of the journey of a pilgrim.

But with that we see the reality of our journey of a Christian as we make our way through our pilgrimage. To our final place. Of course we are not making our way towards a temple this morning.

We give praise to God for this building. We give praise to God for this place. But we know ourselves that God does not live here. God is not contained to this place. And perhaps in our culture we've become so accustomed to calling this place the house of God.

[4 : 43] And not fully wrong in some aspects, but also not particularly helpful biblically, is it? God does not dwell here. God dwells here because his people, of course, are here, as we said in our prayer.

Because we are here as his people. We know God is with us and God is present here. But he's not present in the building itself and we know that. He's present wherever his people are worshipping him, are serving him this day.

We aren't going to a temple. We don't have to make a long, arduous trek across deserts up to Jerusalem to worship God. But the reality is, as we said, we are still this morning and this day, we are still on a pilgrimage, reverend and sisters.

We are on a pilgrimage towards our own final destination. Again, I know just a few faces here. I remember some faces, but I don't know.

And I certainly don't remember where you stand for the Lord. And aware that this has hopefully been recorded, of course, too. So we don't know who might listen to it in the days and the weeks to come.

[5 : 44] The Lord alone knows. But to those of us today, brothers and sisters, this is our story in this psalm. This is our pilgrimage. As we look at this psalm, let's be reminded that we are on a journey.

As we go through this psalm, we are reminded us of the help we have for our journey. And the hope we're given for our journey. And for any, perhaps here, who are listening, who as of yet don't know Jesus for yourself, listen to the reality of a Christian's journey.

Because the truth is, Krishna and non-Christian alike, we all face many, if not almost all, of the same problems and stresses and worries and pains in life.

The only difference is, the Christians, we do it knowing our Saviour has gone before us, and is waiting for us, made a place for us, and is with us every single step of the way.

All that being said, let's look to our first few verses. You're looking, first of all, verses 1 down to verse 2, where we see that the house of God, the place where our pilgrimage is going to, that it's a happy home.

[6 : 51] The house of God is a happy home. Verses 1 and verse 2, I love the as your dwelling place, O Lord of hosts. Of course, the question is, where does God dwell?

As we said before, a few minutes ago, we give praise to God, of course, that we are not having to make our pilgrimage to temples anymore. We know that God dwells with his people.

Of course, the psalmist and the psalm, if they want to get closer to God's presence, they had to make a pilgrimage towards the temple. They had to make a pilgrimage towards a place where God had made his presence known to his people.

And we know that at least, at least, we know there's many more, but at least, of course, three main pilgrimages to be made every year. As they made their way towards the temple, they were getting closer and closer to where God's presence was known.

Because we know that even then, even then, only that one day a year could the high priest enter in to the Holy of Holies. And even then, he had to be clouded by the incense that went before him.

[7 : 55] The presence of God, the Shekinah glory, of course, was there over the tabernacle and over the Holy of Holies and in the Holy of Holies. But even the high priest, it was clouded, it was hidden from him.

They had to get closer to the temple, to be closer to God's presence. But we give praise to God. The question for us today is, where does God dwell for us today?

Where is God's dwelling place today? The psalmist, to say this in verse 1, had to look towards the temple, had to go towards the temple. Where do we look?

Where do we turn when we say to God, we praise God, how lovely is your dwelling place? We said already, we give praise to God that in the coming of our Saviour, fully man and fully God, he enables us now to say truthfully and to know fully that God has made his dwelling place with his people.

Brothers and sisters, right now we have no need, of course, for a temple. We know God's presence is now in us and with us. At this place that we stand, it's literally a holy ground because God is here.

[9 : 10] But he's here because we are here, worshipping him in spirit and in truth. Because we seek to know him, we seek to love him, we seek to serve him. We can know for certain that God has made his home in us and with us.

With the incarnation of our Saviour, we have a new reality. We have God with us. The Holy Spirit, of course, then came to make that clear that he now dwells in us.

And because he dwells in us, we can know for certain that God is with us. Brothers and sisters, as we hear, as we're reminded that God has made his home in you and with you and in me and with me, as we look to verses 1 and verse 2 and see the joy of the psalmist, the longing of the psalmist to be close to God's presence.

We have to ask, do we see the same joy, the same longing in our lives? The psalmist had to, as it were, put the effort in. He had to go the physical distance to get closer and closer to God's presence.

We stand and we sit here this morning and we don't. We know for certain that God has made his home in us and with us. The psalmist had to travel miles.

[10 : 24] Look at the joy he has. His soul is longing, even fainting for the courts of the Lord. His joy is such, even though there's a journey before him, even though there is miles to go, just to be one step closer to God's presence.

He is so full of joy and so full of passion, it's almost as if he is fainting. His soul itself is fainting. The words used in verse 2, the longing soul and the singing flesh and heart.

In the Hebrew, these are the strongest possible words we could use here. These are strong, strong words. All that he is, his whole body, his whole mind, his whole soul, it's longing to be closer and closer to God.

And for him, like we said, that meant he had to put the work in. He had to get walking. He had to get physically close and closer to God. Brothers and sisters, for us, our reality is such that we know that the Lord now dwells with his people.

So the question is, when was the last time we felt like the psalmist feels in these verses? When can we last say honestly that we longed to be closer to God? That with such joy in our hearts and such joy in our souls that we knew his presence is with us?

[11 : 44] We have a great privilege. This morning we can sit here in this beautiful town and this beautiful day and this lovely building. We can sit here and to those outside these walls there are a few people who come to this place and who sing of you songs and who go home again.

But we can come here today and know that God has made his home in you and with you. His presence is here. The Lord of all creation who has all creation as we're in the palm of his hands who is in full control of all things.

The eternal, ever blessed, ever holy Lord. He has made his home in and with his people. That should cause us to find ourselves surely in verse 1 and verse 2 like the psalmist.

We should be singing for joy. All that we are should be leaping for joy as we have a reminder that because of the finished work of our Saviour, because of his work, because of his love, we can know for certain, know for certain, the Lord of Lords, the only, truly, eternal God.

He has made his home with you and in you never to take you away from his presence. Brothers and sisters, this is the hope we have. If a psalmist was happy with the little that he had, how much more full of joy and full of gladness should we be at the great presence God has given us.

[13 : 12] The reality is that we have access to the presence of God. We have access and our knowledge of God the psalmist didn't have and even the great saints of old in the Old Testament that they didn't have.

We can see now fully with full assurance and with biblical truth behind us that God has made his home in and with his people. How lovely is your dwelling place God now dwells in and with his people.

Brothers and sisters, this would give us a joyful heart this morning as we give praise to God that he has seen fit to make us home with his people. Where does God dwell?

He dwells with his people. It takes us to verses 3 and verse 4 so the home of God is a happy home but also it's a home that's open to all.

Verses 3 and verse 4 even the sparrow finds a home and the swallow a nest for herself where she may lay her young and so on. In the immense temple courts we know from history books not just from scripture we know from accounts around the time of Christ himself that we know that in the massive temple complex there was a habitat almost of various birds which lived and which made her home in the temple and in the temple grounds and these birds and these animals which lived in the temple grounds they spent every waking moment close to God's presence of course not very new they are none the wiser as to where their nests were but when the psalmist who is far away from God's presence and away from God's temple when he looks back and he thinks back he remembers the birds these small unimportant animals and they had their home so close to God's presence so close to God's temple he longs to be like them he longs to have the closeness that they have he longs to have the closeness to God's presence that they were afforded

[15 : 28] God's God's temple God's temple God's home it's a home for all to the crowds struggling past the temple they didn't stop for a second to think about the tiny birds living in the crevices of the rock along the way off the walls along the way but these wee birds they had their home there they had their place there God's temple where God is God's home it's a place for all it's a home for all we have that beautiful reminder don't we Matthew 6 and verse 26 Matthew 6 and verse 26 of course Jesus talking to the disciples at an anxious time for them and Jesus reminds them

Matthew 6 26 Jesus says look are the birds of the air who neither sow nor reap nor gather into barns and yet your heavenly father feeds them are you not of more value than they and so on and so on brothers and sisters God who cares for the smallest part of his creation God who cared as it were even for the swallows and the sparrows the tiny uncared for birds in the crevices of his temple he cared and he cares for them as Christ tells us how much more does he care for you and for I as precious beloved children you have a home in God's presence brother and sister if he has called you today if he has called you his own if you know your saviour this day if you can say you love your saviour this day you have a home in his presence you have a home where he is not because of your own abilities your own merit and you know that

I'm sure you're well aware of that you have a home because God cares for the small and we could say with respect for the useless so if we're honest how often do we feel useless again to the world outside we are just a small gathering of strange people singing strange songs and reading from a strange ancient book to our God in the sky as far as we're concerned no one cares but God cares God cares for the small he cares for the useless who does God save what does God look for in the ones he saves does God look for ability or strength for mental ability for physical ability does God look for those who are strong and who are willing to serve him to go out into the mission fields does God only look for those who have such mental ability to memorize every page of scripture who does

God want to be part of his home the small the uncared for the weak God cares even for the smallest of sparrows and swallows that find a place in his home there's a home for you there's a place for you in God's dwelling place if you know Jesus if you love Jesus then that place is for you to be bought a precious price for you you have a place in the house of God if you forgive me for being personal just for a second this is a verse that the Lord used when I was 12 going on 13 to bring me to a saving knowledge of himself as a young very young man young boy young teenager the Lord uses verse 2 to show me verse 3 and verse 4 to show me that in him there's a place for everyone who comes to him not just the weak not just the big and the strong but also the weak for those who feel powerless who feel small for those who are young

God cares even for them there's a home even for them and we have these excuses don't we we must I'll come and I'll serve God I'll come and I'll worship God I'll come and I'll really ask and cry to be saved when I know more when I learn more when I act a better Christian when I look like a better Christian and so on and so on we all know these are nothing but just excuses at the end of the day God calls the small and the weak he calls those that the world might call useless and he calls them to live and to find their home in his place again I don't know where you stand before the Lord perhaps only you know perhaps even you might look the part and dress the part and sound the part I say that with respect but perhaps this day you are not what you should be with the Lord perhaps for many years you've been far away perhaps you've never known him personally for yourself the message we have in these verses is if you want to know him if you want to know

[20 : 54] Jesus and to love Jesus and to serve Jesus there's a place for you in the house of God no matter how weak or how small or how useless you might feel there's a place for you it's a happy home it's a home for all but not for a second does this verse to the psalm tell us the journey is an easy journey we see that in verses 5 down to verse 7 how often do we know that we tire so easily even on a normal journey we've gone somewhere travelling home perhaps that distance of course for myself

I was actually across a few weeks ago and it was one of the worst days I've ever been on the ferry of course the ferry crossing to Lewis is a good almost three hours and on a good day it's bearable on a choppy day three hours turns to six turns to nine it feels as if your whole life is spent on that ferry we tire so easily even from our normal journeys but for those who are travelling to Jerusalem they were travelling through deserts and travelling miles through hostile places and the reality is brothers and sisters and we know this fine well our journey our pilgrimage home it's not always easy it doesn't take a student to come and tell you that from up here I'm sure you know that for yourself fine well in your own lives perhaps only you and the Lord know just how hard things are and indeed perhaps even have been or will be even for you all the Lord himself knows of course that alone through this sometimes the journey is difficult verse 5 blessed are those whose strength is in you see at times the journey is so difficult the only blessing the only source of strength we have is by carrying on in

God's strength when the world around us is collapsing when nothing makes sense when all that we have and all that we are is gone we come again to verse 5 those whose heart whose heart are the highways to Zion in other words those times those days those weeks perhaps even those years when there's nothing to hold on to when all you know all your strength is gone when all you know is gone when life is collapsing around about your ears when you're stuck on your own it feels like exactly these times verse 5 rings true for the Christian in our hearts are the highways to Zion we know that the Lord is with us we know the Lord cares for us we know he has not abandoned us when all else looks like it's going away he does not leave us we see that in verse 6 that as Christians as we go through the valley of Beka literally the valley of dryness as we travel through life and go through these arid times of life when life is hard when life is tough when things are painful when things are grim it's at these times it's at these times the Lord blesses his people what happens in verse 6 as they go through the valley of dryness as they go through this dark arid place they make it a place of springs they make it a place of springs this dry valley is transformed it's transformed as the

Lord's people go through it because the Lord is with his people as they go through in these dark days in these strange days in these hardest and driest of times it's when as Christians we know and so clear to us the Lord is with us we all know of course and I'm sure we love and for good reason that famous poem I guess footprints in the sand as nice as it is it's not fully correct is it it's not just the hard times not just the difficult times the Lord carries us the reality is he carries us at all times not a single day goes past the Lord is not with us looking after us caring for us placing his love on us see verse 5 and verse 6 it's reality of the Christian life there are hard days there are dry days there are days which we are finding ourselves saying Lord I can't go on Lord I can't go on

I can't do this any longer I have no strength left I have no power left it's at these days we find ourselves back in verse 5 and we look to the Lord and we see it's him and his power and his strength alone that carries us through I'm aware this is probably recorded I'll be careful I'm saying this but I was in contact yesterday to a dear friend who is in the middle of Ukraine just now and who's actually underground as of this morning and he was referencing not from this verse but referencing scripture and he was just saying that when literally when his apartment and his livelihood is probably gone he's saying what else do we have but the hope and the knowledge and the trust that God has not abandoned us and that's a reality of the situation a war zone is a big example but I'm sure for yourselves in your personal lives you find yourself in verse 5 and verse 6 in these dark days but what happens what happens when the Lord brings us through these dark days what is the hope of the

[27 : 02] Lord's people in verse 6 and verse 7 they go from strength to strength now this is not just this is not wealth and prosperity preaching the dark days sometimes go on for years and years the hope of verse 7 at the end of verse 7 is true for every single Christian they go from strength to strength the Lord keeps us going each one appears before God in Zion so this is the final hope of all the pilgrims it's the final hope of us as Christians even as we travel through the dark days and the hard days the truth is our place is certain our end is certain our destination it's clear and we know it from now till the end we will appear before God in Zion we will appear before our Lord and our God when our journey is over as hard as dry at times as distressing as a journey might be the Lord knows his people he keeps his people and he takes his people home to be with himself the other of Beka is dry it's hard the Lord he takes his people through even these darkest and hardest of times and he brings them he brings them to himself the truth is the truth is we don't do this in our own strength verse 5 tells us that it's not a case of dragging ourselves through the valley we do it in his strength where's the strength come from how at times do we go on where do we find the energy the strength to keep on going we see that in verses 8 to verse 9 where we see the reality of the one who leads us home see this is our pilgrim's journey but the reality is the journey is not on our own we say that before of course there's those travelling alongside us travelling beside us our fellow brothers and sisters as we go along the journey home but more than that there is one who goes before us in verse 8 and verse 9

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 we know that at times the custom was that as the pilgrims made their way towards the temple made their way towards of course Jerusalem before them would be either the high priest or at times the king and he would lead his people up to the temple maybe follow on behind them the idea being of course that he would be the representative for all those that came behind him those that walked miles who were following the bits who were dirty probably quite smelly who had walked miles through deserts and out of land to get there who were weary who were exhausted who were beyond needing rest and before them would be the high priest or the king as he made their way into the city as he led the people in towards the presence of God dear friends how do we keep on going who keeps us going we find our answer of course in these verses who has gone before us we declare we cry out in verse 9 behold our shield who are we asking this morning the

Lord will look on if we look to ourselves we see the Lord looks at us he sees us as failing as faltering he sees us as those who are dry and who are so sinful those who are so prone to sin as we find ourselves willingly to our shame willingly at times falling back into sins that we hate going astray from God again and again and again and again we find ourselves here in verse 9 what's our cry the same cry as the psalmist we say Lord don't look on us Lord please look at us but instead look on our shield who is the shield the verse tells us look on the face of your anointed one that phrase of course anointed one we transfer it from the Hebrew to the Greek becomes Christos look on the face of your

Christos look on the face of your Christ who goes before us every step of the journey of our life who is the one who leads us home who is the one who is our shield who is the one that God looks on and sees us as holy and perfect in him the Lord and our Saviour Jesus Christ he leads us all the way from the start through the dry times through the hard times through the dark days through the times of glorious power and strength through the days of happiness and singing he keeps on leading us and the Lord looks on us he sees us through the finished work of course of our Saviour he sees the face of his anointed one brothers and sisters this is what gives us strength today isn't it this journey we do it in his strength in verse 5 and verse 6 we also do it with him before us covered in his righteousness when the

Lord looks on you when he looks on me does he see our weariness does he see our falling away does he see our sinfulness does he see our constant backbiting does he see our constant sinning or for Christians the word tells us and God assures us and God quite clearly tells us in language which we cannot and should not argue against that our sins have been cast away cast into the depths of the sea the Lord no longer remembers these things against his people instead we go behind our leader the Lord Jesus Christ we'll cover this God willing perhaps a wee bit more this evening that reminder we have that wonderful reminder in John 17 we see the reminder of Christ as he prays the high priestly prayer what does Jesus say as Jesus prays that beautiful prayer near the end of his time on earth he reminds us that when the father looks on us he looks on us in love the father loves us as much as he loves the son how is that possible how can we say that that doesn't sound right the father loves us as much as he loves the son because the father looks on us he sees us covered by the son brother and sister this journey is a hard journey it's a long journey we do it in his strength and in his power like in

[34 : 33] Colossians 3 and verse 3 reminds us we are hidden with Christ that glorious image that almost he covers us we are almost hidden behind him or he surrounds us we are hidden inside him Jesus alone is anointed one Jesus alone goes before us ultimately this gives us assurance we know we can't do it ourselves we know we have no power we feel it this verse and this phrase and this reminder of verse 8 and verse 9 it gives us assurance because the truth is Christian you can't do it I can't do it the journey is horrible and hard and long at times but he goes before us and because he goes before us despite our own failings and shortcomings and backslidings and everything else that we find ourselves going through he keeps leading us on and because he keeps leading us on we know for certain that we will get to that place because he's gone before us he's prepared a place for us reality as we see in our final few verses there's no other home for us there is no other home for the

Christian that beautiful verse we all know so well in verse 10 a day in God's courts is better than a thousand elsewhere the truth is that a day as it were even being a doorkeeper a day of menial service we could say is better than a thousand thousand days intense of wickedness the implication in these verses is one day as it were doing the smallest of jobs in God's house one day doing the cleaning and tidying of God's temple it's so much more glorious so much more wonderful than thousands upon thousands of days in the pleasure of sin tense of wickedness all the joy and all the fun and all the excitement in these tense of wickedness for thousands of days there compare nothing to just a passing few moments in God's house and the Christians we know that we know how futile and how pointless sin is how the pleasure and the joy of sin how it's fleeting and it gives us no real lasting joy whereas that briefest glimpse that we have at times of God's presence that closeness at times we feel to God's presence it's worth immeasurably more than all the world can offer us dear friends it's a hard journey it's a long journey it's a journey that's worth it because it's a journey that ends in God's presence a journey that ends close to our

God again we have access to God that the psalmist himself did not have the one who himself spent time quite literally close to God's physical presence and yet he had more limited access than we do this morning in this town in your pews just now you can in your mind this very second we can come before God's presence and know that he sees us that he knows us that he hears us we can keep on going through this journey of life knowing that even through the valley of Baca even through the dry times and the dark times that he is with us all the time reminding ourselves that he goes before us has gone before us is with us it's alongside us every single step of the way it's a long journey it's a hard journey it's a glorious journey because we have the full hope and the full assurance we're not on our own Jesus is with us he promises never to leave nor forsake us we'll see that more in the evening brothers and sisters that is our hope that is our promise again spend time this day looking at psalm 84 if you have time this afternoon and see the wonderful ways which your journey is reflected in this psalm every one of us will find our place here somewhere perhaps many of us are getting closer to the end of a journey we've had many many days in the valley of Baca but we find ourselves now saying that we find the journey getting closer and closer to the end perhaps some you've just begun your journey and there's perhaps long days and good days ahead of you but if you know the

Lord you know this journey is a journey that will end in his presence with him for all time to be assured of that glorious glorious truth let's put our heads now a word of prayer Lord we thank you again for your word Lord thank you for the beauty and the wonder of it Lord we ask you bless your word to your people here today Lord you forgive anything that was said in accordance to your word I give you praise the power is not in the jar of clay Lord who stands here the power is in you as you work through your living word speak to your people Lord encourage your people through it this day help us this day to have our minds and our hearts focused on you give us rest this day we're able to rest and to spend this day Lord in praise and in prayer to you again bless your people here take us home in safety now that you will help us to gather again this evening to come around your word once more to be encouraged and uplifted by it ask all these things resting fully and securely on our only anointed one the Lord

Jesus Christ the one who brings us home to himself going things in his name for his sake Amen that's again