

The Day that Excels a Thousand

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[0 : 0 0] This evening in Psalm 84 on the day that excels a thousand and we may turn to Psalm 84 which we've been looking at that's on page 5 to 6 and we may just take up the reading at verse 4 just to get the thread Blessed are those who dwell in your house they will still be praising you Blessed is the man whose strength is in you whose heart is set on pilgrimage As they pass through the valley of weeping they make a dust spring The 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 Selah considered O God behold our shield And look upon the face of your anointed Or of your Messiah as we were thinking today For a day in your courts is better than a thousand I would rather be a doorkeeper in the house of my God Than dwell in the tents of wickedness Psalm 84 and verse 10 Some translations give us a slight expansion of verse 10 For in your courts a day is better than a thousand of my own choosing I would rather be a doorkeeper in the house of my God Than dwell in the tents of wickedness

And that translation gives a good sense to what is meant here The day that excels a thousand I want us to think by way of introduction On how from the earliest days of human history People have tried to cram into their lives As much as possible And if you read history You can see that in all sorts of ways In fact if you read biblical history From the development Of the people groupings You see that people Were gifted with various abilities Whether it was making music Or making instruments for music Or other crafts And so on People sought to busy themselves And get as much into their lives as possible

There's a sense in which it's right To be busy But the problem is that people can be too busy And far too busy for God And for serving God And there are a lot of things we can say About the 21st century I'm sure But one of the things we can certainly say Is that we see a huge upsurge In this way of thinking And cramming into life As much as is possible How often we hear people say And in a sense We say it for ourselves too There's no time for this or that Life is so busy For some people Life is absolutely crammed With things to do Places to go People to see Business are in and so on And life becomes Just a constant round Of things to do

And so on And that In the 21st century That's partly due Probably chiefly to do With the influence Of secularism Secular thinking Or what we may call Humanistic Materialism As well These views These life views Form people's thinking That it's all about Make the most of it When you're here Because you're only here For a little while At best It's going to be a hundred years Or a hundred years plus Very short time When you consider All things And this Carries people along People become Part of a process They feel If you listen to The evolutionists You'll hear that Put eloquently Although we say Biblically In a wrong way But they tell us We're part of a process

[5 : 06] We are born We live our brief span And we're gone And gone forever And therefore They say to people You've got to cram Into your life As much as you can Enjoy it It's only a brief span But you see When you look at the Bible And when you Look at the teaching Of the word of God Here Or the psalmist In this Psalm We've been studying The Holy Spirit Shows us That the best way To live Each and all Of our days Is to live To the praise And the honour Of God To live As servants Of the Lord And if you go back To the great people Of the Bible They describe themselves More or less As servants Of God Most High As servants Of the Lord The prophets Describe themselves As servants Of the Lord

Nothing very grandiose About the word For servant Ebed A servant Because that's the way They saw themselves In the New Testament The apostles Called themselves Duloid Bond Slaves That's how they viewed Themselves In relation To the Lord But they were Pleased To be The servants Of the Lord It wasn't a burden To them It was what Life was all about It was Real living Living For God And we saw In the In the Previous Section That the life Of service As indeed The life Of prayer Has got to be Rooted In a relationship With God's Anointed One With the Messiah We were looking Earlier today At verse 9 Oh God Behold Our shield That's the name That the pre-incarnate

Christ Took to himself Genesis 15 When he spoke To Abraham And the second Part of it Look upon the face Of your Messiah The psalmist Speaking by the spirit Even Before Christ Became man Sees him As the one Promised And as the one Who appeared Here and there Along the path Of history Appearing To the fathers And so on And so Not only Is our life Of prayer Tied up With our Relationship To him But our Service Is tied up With our Relationship To him And that's Why our Service Is to be Self-denying It's to be Diligent It's to be Joyful And it's to be Humble And we were Singing about These things Earlier on Jesus

Encouraged His disciples Not to go With the flow Not to be Concerned to make A big name For ourselves But to be Concerned with What someone Has called The cup of Cold water Christianity The little Things Don't neglect The little Things They're Important And we I think Need to Regain This view Of living For the Lord And serving The Lord There's Something Wonderfully Exalted If we could But see it In serving The Lord In the Little Things Of life That's That's Why we Read in The passage In Matthew 20 Where James and John's Mother Came along And she Asked this Special Favor for James and John That when Jesus would Sit on his Throne of Judgment There would Be one On the Right And the Other On the Left

She Wanted Them Exalted She Wanted Them To Be To Be Big Names To Be Out There With A Boss No No Jesus Said Don't Be like That Don't Think Like That That's Gentile Thinking They Like To Get In Positions Of Authority And Lord It Over Others Don't Be Like That The Son Of Man Himself The Lord Of Glory We Were Singing About In The Psalm We Were Singing About His Majesty Great Is Our Lord And Great In Power His Wisdom Is Profound That Same Lord Became Man He Made No No No Account Of Himself And Went About Doing Good He Did Not Come To Be Served But To Serve This Is The Way To Think Says Jesus And In The Same Vain The Psalmist Says All These Hundreds Of Years Before Jesus

[10 : 10] Became Man He Says He Says For A Day In Your Courts A Day Serving You Lord Is Better Than A Thousand Of My Own choosing I Want Us To Listen And To Learn From What The Spirit Has To Say To Us On The Day That Excels A Thousand And The First Thing We Have Anticipated A Little I Know But We Want To Focus On Love For God Service Better Is A Day In Your Courts Than A Day Of My Own Choosing And Of Course As We We Have Been Saying The Psalm Writer Who As We Remarked Before Is Of The Sons Of Korah He Was Part Of The Lower End As It Were Of The Priestly Ministry The Fellas That Did The Menial Tasks But

This Psalm Writer Speaking By The Spirit Was Glad To Be A Servant In The Courts Of His God And He Was Literally In As Well As Spiritually Part Of That Living House Of God And He Delighted To Be In The Place Where God Had Promised To Meet With His People And He Longed To Be There His Whole Life Was Revolving Around That And You See In A Very Real Sense That Is To Be The Attitude Of Each And All Of Us That Is To Be The Attitude Of Followers Of Jesus To Feel That We're Part Of Something That Is That Belongs To The Lord We were Saying Already It's Not About The Structures About The Bricks And Mortar The Building Principly It's

About The Body The Living Organism The Spiritual Temple Belonging To That Through Faith In The Messiah And That's Why Togetherness In Worship And Togetherness In Serving As Living Stones In God's Spiritual House Is Basic For Believers We're Not Alone In This Congregation Where So Often People Turn Out At One End Of The Day And You Don't See Them Until Possibly Till Next Week It's Important To Be Part Of The Whole Thing Of Spiritual Worship Part Of The Work That We're In As A Part Of The Whole Spiritual House Of God And When We See It That Way Then We're Interested In Developing That Together Even

If Even If Our Own Abilities Are Limited Even If We Ourselves Are Limited There's Something For Us To Do And We Are To Have A Mutual Interest In Serving The Lord And In Having A Real Sympathy For His Cause A Love For His Cause For His People And Of Course Ultimately For Himself But You See We're To Go Beyond That Part Of Being Servants In The Lord's House Part Of Being Servants In God's Work Is That We Have A Care That Others May Come In Among Us That Others May Come To Know What We've Come To Know That's Why It's So Important Not To Not To Be Dwelling In Doubting Castle Not To Be Locked Up In Am I Amtai Am I Amtai

And Just Going On Like That Endlessly But To Simply Trust The Lord As Our Saviour As Our Redeemer And Friend And Feel More Part Of The Service Of God As Part Of His People The The Psalmist Certainly Brings That Home To Us Here In A Very Clear Way He Shows Us How It Was His Delight How He Enjoyed Being Part Of The Service Of God Literally Then It Is In The Temple Courts But More Particularly As Part Of That Spiritual Temple Of God And He Had A Concern That Others Would Be Delivered He Says Himself His Own Testimony I Would Rather A Day In Your Courts

[15:13] Than A Thousand Of My Own Choosing God And God And We Want To Come To That Same Place We Want Not Only To Long For The Salvation Of Others But To Live In Such A Way That We Lead Them To The Lord Jesus Christ And The Way To Do That Is Not To Live Like The World it's to live a distinctly Christian life it's not about going with the flow one can't help but feel and sadly I think time will prove this to be true one of the sad features of Christian life today I'm just generalizing here is that so many are thinking we want to show them that you can live the Christian life and do this, do that, do the next thing be going along in the flow and the result of that is that you can hardly distinguish between those who are the Lord's people and those who are in the world because the love of the world is all too clearly in the heart of the people of God to an unhelpful degree they laugh and joke and share sometimes indelicate jokes they seem to have no problem with the odd blasphemy so they wouldn't call it that that's not the description of those who are the Lord's people in the Old Testament scriptures in the book of Psalms or indeed in the apostolic letters if you take we'll not do it just now but you can go away and remind yourselves of it if you take Galatians 5 and you look at verses 19 to 26 and you contrast the works of the flesh and those of the spirit there's a world of difference and there ought to be a world of difference between those who serve the Lord and those who serve themselves and in that implicitly the enemy too the worldling lives for himself the worldling lives worldly ways and the apostle John you remember when we were studying him said do not live the world do not live all that go with the flow Steph because the world is passing away and the desires thereof nominal religion in the psalm writer's day was like that it was go with the flow nominal Christianity goes with the flow it's edging more and more towards the world accepting this accepting that accepting the next thing what does the Bible say?

oh well you know you've got to move with the times go with the flow God's not like that he doesn't go with the flow and his judgment will not be according to the flow at the particular point when he brings it all to an end Jesus said to the Jews Moses in whom you trust will be your judge the law of God is the eternal law of God it's his it reflects his character it used to be important to the believer it ought to be important to the believer today we frame our service on what he says we should do and what we should not do and the psalm writer here brings forward this wonderful way of putting it he loves the service of God for a day in your courts is better than a thousand of my own choosing and we need to ask ourselves about this and how we how we rate the service of God how we rate it are we pleased to be his servants through faith in the Messiah are we able to say with the psalm writer with the enthusiasm that oozes from the words a day in your courts

Lord Jesus in your service is better than a thousand of my own choosing or as the the metrical version has it in the tents of sin we need to consider this we need to think about how we rate the service of God we ought to rate it so very highly we ought to count it a privilege to serve him even in small ways as we are able by grace some of you have been spared to live more than 80 years but if you have lived 80 years some of us maybe think we will not make that but anyway that is another story but if you have lived about 80 years then you have lived 29,220 days and if you have lived those years outside of Christ you have lived them in the tents of sin they are days of your own choosing but if you were to come to faith in the Lord

Jesus Christ even tonight and two hours later be summoned into his presence that day this day of which you come to faith is better than the thousands of days in the tents of sin of our own choosing that's true a day in your courts is better than a thousand and he doesn't mean simply a thousand he's taking that as a contrast it could be twenty thousand could be ten thousand could be five thousand the point is it is so much better infinitely better to be serving the Lord even for the shortest space of time than living our days out according to our own choosing and we need to grasp more of the wonder of a day's service even a day's service in the courts of the Lord that is in the service in his service in his cause here in this world and if we could but focus more on that we would gain more assurance of our real interest in the saviour we would see our service as useful because it's done as in to the Lord

Jesus Christ when Paul said to the Corinthians in 1 Corinthians 15 we were quoting in prayer be steadfast immovable always abounding in the work of the Lord work for the Lord whatever it is whatever little we manage to do we know that that labour that that work that that service is not in vain in him we're to grasp this we're to lay it to heart we're to make much of it and if if we're not there yet if we're not in his service by faith then we're not to delay coming we're to come as we are and we're to come in the now of salvation and avail ourselves of the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ freely given we're to ask ourselves am I really interested in serving the Lord am I actually serving him and I haven't realized it's simply it's as simple as that believing in him brings us in to service to serving the Lord

[24 : 21] Jesus Christ to be content to serve him and that you see gives a whole new dimension to our life here to our pilgrimage to door keeping which we'll come to because we're serving him here as pleases him and we will serve him hereafter in what he has prepared for us his servants that glorious final chapter of the Bible we read the words his servants shall see his face and shall serve him we're going on that's why sometimes when there's a funeral a minister may say and pray it that you've taken your servant to higher service because that's what it is but it's possible because we have come by faith in the Messiah to serve him here and to look forward to higher service in his due season

I'd rather be in that position I'd rather be serving the Lord in his courts in his cause than serving a thousand days or more of my own choosing it's a deeply touching though not to be abused revelation that there was a man on the cross unnamed beside Jesus and his life was ebbing away and somewhere as his life ebbed away he changed from a mocker into a believer he had spent his days as a criminal and murderer certainly his adult days he had lived in the tents of wickedness days of his own choosing wicked days and he's dying there the death he deserved he admits it and yet as his life ebbs away and he considered

Jesus the crucified he was heard to utter the penitent's cry Lord or Jesus remember me when you come into your kingdom and on that cross so to speak he was able to cast his whole hope and all his cares upon Jesus he cast himself as one helpless upon the Lord Jesus Christ for salvation and you remember the words well enough Jesus said to him today you shall be with me in paradise and in his hour or so of dwelling in the courts of the Lord as a servant of the Lord even on the cross with that wonderful testimony he was better for those few hours than in all the years of wickedness today you shall be with me in paradise and you and me have to be settled on on this on the wonder of serving the

Lord we've got to value it and we've got to value it highly more to be desired than gold yea much fine gold now the fact of the matter is that the worldling judges following Jesus in terms of loss and you've heard it I'm sure if you've talked to people about the saviour and coming to him their mind is working on what that's going to mean and they're thinking about what they're going to lose aren't they they're thinking about what they'll have to give up and what they don't want to give up they're thinking the change will be too much too costly but we are encouraged here to think about spending and spending ourselves and being spent for him and we're to encourage others to think like that too and to tell them that the

Lord Jesus Christ will give them grace not to see it loss but great gain nowhere is that better put than in the words of the apostle Paul who was at the top end of rabbinic Judaism him he was at the top end and he counted all that as rubbish that he might win Christ and be found in him and Paul again and again referred to himself thereafter as a bond slave of Jesus Christ and we are to be settled that we've entered into something that it may be difficult service here but we're going on to higher service we're going on to what the hymn writer calls solid joys and lasting pleasures now there's nothing wrong you see with this line of reasoning

[30 : 35] Moses used it we have that on good authority we have it there in the letter to the Hebrews that Moses when he was confronted with the choice of suffering and affliction and being ridiculed if he opted to follow the Lord and throw his lot in with the Lord's people there was a great cost involved he was going to lose out potentially scholars of Old Testament reckon and I agree with them that Moses could have become a Pharaoh but he turned his back on all that and the letter to the Hebrews says he chose not the passing pleasures of sin which were there for a season but he chose to suffer affliction with the people of God because he knew that the best course was that course and he would be no loser there is joy in serving

Jesus joy amidst the darkest night for I've learned the wondrous secret and I'm walking in the light there's joy in serving Jesus for a day in your courts is better than a thousand of my own choosing and lastly and briefly serving him is about self negation serving him is about self negation I would rather be a door keeper in the house of my God than dwell in the tents of wickedness now some interpreters of course make much of the fact that this word doorkeeper is used fairly frequently in the

Old Testament to describe those who had a rather important position they guarded kings they guarded the VIPs of the day there are several references for example in the book of Esther to this we're told in chapter 6 and verse 2 that two men one was called Bithana and the other Teresh they were the king's eunuchs and doorkeepers that's the word their life of service was an important service they served the king no less again in Esther 5 13 we're told that Mordecai was one of the royal doorkeepers and in Esther 2 21 he sat within the king's gate and later he held the position of walking within the court of the house of the women he was honorable and he was entrusted with this important service in that sense too he was a doorkeeper but if we look at it simply about the exalted side of it we miss the whole story because contained in the word itself is the idea of just being inside the threshold of the door of just being in

God's household and the notion is not wanting of being prepared to do in the Lord's service whatever is required of us and it seems to me that it's in that latter sense that the psalmist is thinking here Rabbi Cohen in his commentary on the psalms says I'd rather stand on the threshold as a mere supplant but good old Bishop Horn the evangelical bishop says this in his commentary and I think he's got the point here he who hesitates to be a penitent in the porch of God's house preferring to be a sinner on the throne will continue in the tents of wickedness I think that's nicely put what he does here is he takes the most exalted person even the king royalty and he says if they hesitate to be penitent if they hesitate to come to repentance and faith and humble themselves to be servants of the

Lord they may continue on the throne but they'll continue in the tents of wickedness we mentioned earlier on today in prayer I'm pretty sure you knew it was Queen Victoria I was talking about but she said of herself that although her empire spanned the world she was a humble servant of the king of kings that's the mentality that's needed not glorying in being somebody and that you see is something that is easier said than done it's not easy to be happier by far to be the least and the lowest of the servants of Jesus it's easy to say it but it's not easy to be that but the

[37 : 00] Lord would have us be like that he would have us think like that just to be doorkeepers in the modern sense just to have little tasks serving the Lord in very ordinary ways that's important in temple times of course the Korathites as we mentioned they did the menial tasks tasks but Jesus exalts the menial tasks he rebukes his disciples who want a seat at his right hand and a seat at his left you're no better than the gentles who are pushing and shoving for position don't be like that be prepared to be a servant even as the son of man came not to be served though he could have been he could have insisted on his rights but he negated himself he made no account of himself he came to serve and he came to serve as we were reading to give us an understanding of what it really is to serve the

Lord to say for a day in your courts is better than a thousand of my own choosing I would rather be a door keeper in the house of my God I would rather be in there as a penitent as a believer as a humble servant than be a somebody in this world Jesus shows us what is really important and if you look around you and it's not too difficult to see you will see that in 21st century Christianity we're far too much affected by the opposite of what Jesus says by people aiming high and to be important and to have places of importance to be seen to have key positions that includes ministerial brethren too

I fear we are far too tainted with the spirit of the word and disinclined to do the menial tasks and my dear friend if you find that it's through a few that you're more and more inclined to do the menial tasks to take them on rejoice rejoice that he's working in you rejoice that he's molding and shaping you to be more like himself not less more that he's conforming you more to his own image that you're not afraid to get your hands dirty in his work my dear friends as we leave this remember that spiritual snobbery is just the very opposite it's the antithesis of

Jesus he was no spiritual snob the lord of heaven there was nothing superior about him he made no account of himself and nowhere does that come out more powerfully to us than on that night in which he was betrayed there in the upper room when he guarded himself with the towel and washed the feet of his disciples let us embrace these points as we think about the day that excels a thousand and the meaning of that to count it an inestimable privilege to be humble servants of the Lord Jesus Christ making it out business to model ourselves on him who not only went about doing good but who made no account of himself who touched people's broken lives to help and to heal maybe the nobody people but he touched their lives because he made no account of himself and if we model ourselves on the master then we'll embrace this text of scripture with new understanding for a day in your courts is better than a thousand of my own choosing

I would rather be a doorkeeper in the house of my God than dwell in the tents of wickedness Amen Men can come in