

# Through Baca's Vale

*Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.*

Date: 28 July 2022

Preacher: Rev Donald M Macleod

[ 0 : 0 0 ]     let's uh for a short time turn back to the chapter we had a book of psalms and psalm 84 book of psalms and psalm 84 originally a series in psalm 84 was a plan for ourselves in the evenings but the way things worked out and we now find ourselves of course lord's prayer instead and but still psalm 84 was on my mind so here we are again in psalm 84 a few times over the last few years where we almost had psalm 84 in the service but it didn't happen so for a very short time this evening an overview of this psalm looking at the whole psalm for sake of a text we can perhaps even just take the wonderful glorious words of the very very first verse how amiable or how lovely are thy tabernacles o lord of hosts it says of course we see a psalm of the sons of korah the sons of korah were those we've covered before i'm sure were those who tended to the temple those who lived in the temple their homes were part quite literally part of the temple's structure on the side walls of the temple there were small houses and the sons of korah and our families lived in these houses from the second they woke up to the second they slept their whole lives were lives of service in the temple of course they all night of course they were still sleeping within the temple walls themselves all that they had all that they did all that they were was part of loving god of serving god of quite literally being part of god's service so it's a psalm dedicated towards them and the writer of this psalm and we can't say for certain who he was the writer of this psalm we can at least say one or two things about him this man is a man who knows god who loves god but who for some reason is not where he wants to be physically he seems to be at some distance away from the temple the commentators believe most of them believe that the writer of this psalm is indeed one of the sons of korah one of the men who who lived and who worked and who served in the temple and for whatever reason he's away from the temple and he is just longing to be back physically longing to be back where he loves to be in god's house serving god but despite who actually wrote the psalm originally what's important for us this evening is to note that psalm 84 was used by god's people was used by the children of israel and used for quite that specific purpose at times the psalm 84 amongst other psalms was one of the psalms that the lord's people would sing as they made their way towards the temple now some point last year i didn't look when we covered psalm 126 together of course that psalm is also a psalm of ascent a psalm where we see god's people going towards the temple psalm 84 is in the same same vein it was sang by the people as they gathered together making their way in their pilgrimages towards the temple once or twice or three times a year many of them more than that they would make their way to worship god to sacrifice to god to be closer to god's physical presence on earth if we use that word where god would make himself known

of course in the holy of holies where only the high priest could go the people could go so far towards it and this is a psalm of longing quite simply of longing to be closer to god for ourselves this evening we praise god that we no longer have to make any physical journeys to find or to be closer to god's presence it is no small thing to say and we praise god for it but god's presence is not found in any building in particular to say that would be to be wrong of course god's presence is found whereas people are gathered together worshipping his name so just now as we're here as brothers and sisters god's presence is here with us we are in god's presence and as we always try and pray that we'll be mindful of that it's no small thing for us right now to know that not because of the building but because of who we are and what we're doing that god's presence is this any moment in our midst as it we're aware that god is here with us but there's something we're missing isn't there we trust and we believe that god's presence is here we trust and believe as christians that every day of our lives we are living in god's presence that he has made his home in us and he works in us and works through us but we know there's something missing we know we're still not quite there that's where we come to this psalm for us as christians we know don't we that we are on a journey much like our brothers and sisters of old brothers and sisters who made their physical journey to the temple year after year after year in one sense nothing's changed for us we need not make sacrifices we know that and we need not travel we know that but in a sense we're still traveling and looking forward and if we're being honest at times just longing to be closer to god in a sense we are in this psalm seeing our journey as christians our walk as christians making our way through the journey heading towards our final destination for us that is not a temple on earth it is in fact of course the real presence of god the actual presence of god is being in his presence in glory the new heavens and in the new earth so quite simply this is a psalm which tells us of our journey as christians let in mind just just four very simple and it will be very simple and very brief headings as we look at this psalm first of all looking at the verses one down to verse two where we see as christians our longing for god then in verses three down to verse four we see our home in god then verses five to verse seven we see the journey towards our home and then in verse eight and verse nine we see our shield and god willing if there's time we can look at the final few verses but i think four points is enough to keep us going this evening at least first of all verses one down to verse two a longing for god as we said this is the psalm of one who is used to being close to god but who for whatever reason finds himself physically away from the temple but the psalmist's mind is still solidly and steadfastly set on god set on worshipping god how amiable or how lovely how lovely are thy tabernacles lord of hosts as we said the question is where does god dwell when we sing this psalm when we read this psalm

when we perhaps even pray this for ourselves when we think how lovely lord is your dwelling place where does god dwell not in the temple or in buildings made by the hands of man in a sense yes god is with his people right now he is here with us and in us we said already working in us and moving in us leading us and guiding us but in a sense as we pray and sing the words of a psalmist here in verse one we like the psalmist we're looking forward aren't we to a place and to a day where god's presence will be more fully seen and more fully known and respect more fully felt by us we touched on this last sabbath evening didn't we talking about god's kingdom coming in a sense it's similar to this god's presence much like god's kingdom is now but is also not yet we said that last sunday evening god's kingdom is here now it came of course with christ and his kingdom is expanding but it's also not yet it's not yet complete and it won't be complete until that final day with new heavens and new earth like we sang in psalm 72 every day where where god's glory will fill the whole universe fill the whole earth same here with being in god's presence in a sense yes we are very much aware of god's presence that god dwells in us and with us as christians but also there's a sense isn't there that we are not there yet we long for the day we long for that final day we will find ourselves find ourselves in the presence of our god without the sin to hold us back without the the scales of our eyes which darken our eyes without all the baggage and all the the dirt and nonsense that clings onto us and that we cling on to it's a psalm here of looking forward as christians we look forward don't we like this psalmist we find ourselves some days saying lord god of hosts my soul longeth verse 2 yea even fainteth the courts of the lord longing and fainting to be just closer to god my heart and my flesh cry out for the living god the psalmist here and the words being used here words in english are quite clear in the hebrew the words are even more just explicitly obvious as what's going on the psalmist is using with respect to the the biggest the strongest words he can possibly use here to say that all that he is all that he has is just longing his heart is longing the word heart there is literally the the hebrew word for your soul in a sense your being your essence all that you are the same word used again and again throughout the psalms to talk about who you are as a person your personality your soul all the inner side of things all your spirit all the spirit all the soul all the heart of this man is longing to be closer to god but even more than that his flesh cries out his very body's longs to be closer and more in god's presence and to be in god's company to be with god's people to be with and closer to god's presence christians the challenge for you and for i this evening as we read these verses is to ask for us who know more about god than the psalmist ever did this is a man who spent his life in the temple and with respect we can say that we know more about god than he ever did well how can we say that

is that not very full of ourselves to think that well we can say that because what the psalmist longed for what this son son of cora spent his life looking towards the the coming of the messiah that's happened we live looking back at our savior coming we live with the full knowledge of god's plan of salvation this man here who longed to be closer to god who out of his love for his god was longing and crying out his very soul his very body was was aching to be closer to god his knowledge of god and his knowledge of god's plan was so much more limited than ours and the challenge is the obvious one that we're here this evening and we have in front of us the full plan of god's salvation god has revealed to us through his word the full plan of his salvation our savior has come and we know what the future holds for us as believers so if this man with his limited understanding and his limited revealed knowledge if he could praise god and cry out to god as he did the question is what is causing us not to cry out not to have a same sense of love and of joy and of longing in our hearts in a sense it's a question that can only be asked and you and i ourselves will have to answer it what is there in our lives in our personal lives perhaps in our spiritual lives big sins to use a term what we might call smaller sins because sin is sin but but sins that we call small sins in our minds sins that we cling to sins that we don't think are as bad and so on and so on perhaps we're clinging to them perhaps they cling to us perhaps there's some reason that's stopping us from fully understanding and fully enjoying god's presence in our lives now of course we understand that we are human we're still in our flesh and for as long as we are here on this side of eternity we will never be the complete thing we know that the work of sanctification on goes each and every day we become more and more like our savior but that work isn't complete until we see him as he is the question is not how do you make yourself more perfect no that's that's a wrong question to ask the question is is there anything just now in my life and again only you and the lord will know this anything in my life that's preventing me to worship god and to praise god like the psalmist here does in verse two so anything stopping you and i from giving our whole life over to god in song and in praise this is a man whose whole life is about serving worshiping and loving his god as he thinks about god he thinks about the the literal physical temple of god we see in verses three down to verse four we see as he ponders the temple he brings to mind a beautiful simple but all-important detail about the place of god was seen in his day here we have our second point that the house of god of the place of god is a a place for all verses three and verse four you the sparrow have found and house and the swallow a nest for herself where she may lay her young even by an altar so lord of hosts my king and my god the historical context is the historical reality is that in the temple walls and we know this

not just from scripture but we know this from history from written sources that the temple walls were lined every gap was filled up with tiny wee bird's nests hundreds if not thousands i'm sure of birds nests littering the temple walls and in these temple walls would live as we see here these tiny birds sparrows and the swallows these birds which are worshippers wouldn't have paid any attention to they're just part of the framework part of the building same way we don't think twice about seeing a sparrow or a blackbird flying by us but these wee birds which are uncared for unseen unthought about they have found their home in the glorious beautiful setting of god's holy temple where his presence is made known to his people where his glory would come and descend that shekinah glory would come and be in the holy of holies the high priest would enter with fear and trembling where god's presence would be known and seen to the high priest where his people would worship him in that glorious place where heaven meets earth these wee birds are living out their lives in their wee nests in the walls and the psalmist mentions these wee birds because he's bringing to mind the fact that even there the lord god the lord of hosts as aware has a place for them but in his temple but in his place there's a place even for the most useless humanly speaking of animals most pointless the cheapest of animals but there they had a place in god's house there's no time this evening but if you want some homework this week there's also a glorious truth and a glorious importance in verse 3 as to the reality as we have in our in our belief and in our grounding as reformed christians into the importance of god's love for the children of believers but that's your homework i won't test you but your homework in verse 3 is important truth that verse 3 speaks to for that but there's no time this evening for that but the puritans quite and reformers themselves spent some time in in verse 3 as to the importance and the care that god has not just for believers but for their children also god cares for the small god cares for those the world thinks are uncared for the world doesn't care about and we'll see that god willing this coming lord's day we're looking in the morning at the samaritan woman an outcast hated and loved and so on and so on a woman who the world and did not care about did not like but god cared enough that he would save her is that not our story it's not our story too once we were going about our daily lives we were as aware just living in in the world having no care having no understanding but god in his love and god in his care he found in his temple a place for us and he placed us there okay there's no time but speaking a personal note it was psalm 84 in particular psalm 84 and these verses which were which the lord used in my own uh salvation story as a young man as a young boy 12 13 years old it was these verses that god used eventually to speak to me the reminder that god cares for his people and has a place for his people we see that in verse 4 blessed are they that dwell in thy house they will still be praising thee

[ 20 : 16 ] it's important to see the word they use for dwell dwell i don't have a chance to look at the gallic for our left i know the gallic has because it's together with the idea of togetherness it's not just with respect you're not just plonked there sitting there just there you are there and you're meant to be there you're there with him you're dwelling with when the hebrew has the same sense as the gallic there that that you're there intentionally god has taken you from where you were and he has placed you in his temple according to his perfect plan out of his love for you and for his glory and note again verse 4 that those who are in god's house those who have a place in god's house those who have a home in god's house they will still be praising thee in english that's quite clunky but it's quite quite clunky because the literal thing of that is it's an ongoing sense there is no end to the praising of verse 4 that those who are in god's house the psalmist says will praise god time without end the action you're praising is ongoing it's ongoing so is the action of dwelling in other words those who are in god's house are in god's house for all time and those who are in god's house for all time will be praising god for all time security safety protection love and care that is the glorious image we have in verses 3 and verse 4 where god has his home for his people as christians right now that gives us hope doesn't it to go about our daily business as we find ourselves at times at times so so lost and so confused as the world at times is so painful and we all know that in our own experience we've all gone through and we perhaps are going through situations that are beyond us and we all have that reality that that longing for a place of rest a place of safety a place of comfort and this psalm reminds us that ultimately we only find that place of comfort that place of rest dwelling with god in his presence in his house the truth is that the journey to the house is still a journey a journey to our third point verses five down to verse seven verse five to our seven we see the journey being explained to us this journey to the temple was for many of the jews a real journey an arduous journey we covered this last time in psalm 126 they journeyed we know historically through deserts through valleys through rock faces and through mountains and there were many who traveled miles upon miles landscapes which today are almost uncrossable by road never mind back in this day but we made the journey a physically hard journey a mentally tough journey i'm sure a spiritually hard journey but they're making their way towards the temple in verse five we see that as the christian as a believer as we make our journey towards our final home of our god he guides us he gives us strength first five blessed is a man whose strength is in thee in whose heart are the ways of them okay our translations would have this verse say at the end in whose heart are the highways or the ways of zion the word zion does appear in the text here in other words the image here is that however hard the journey however difficult the trek is but for the believer it's almost as if the map is imprinted in our minds

it's part of who we are we want times go off road go off the map at times we will stumble we will fall we will make a mess of our journey but ultimately we will keep walking the right way home even for those of us who perhaps will go off for some years at times and we know that believers will go off for years we will always if we know the lord truly will come back we'll come back and join and rejoin the journey home confession reminds us of that that's the scripture again and again and again brothers and sisters verse five gives us hope even the days where we feel perhaps a bit lost in our our walk as christians our journey as christians verse five reminds us that the lord is keeping us in the way that he won't lose us he won't forget about us regardless of how much of a mess we make of our walking how much of a mess we make we go off off track as it were he will bring us in his own way his own time back to following the way home we see that even more we are sure to us in verse six this verse we all know so well who passing through the valley of beka make it a well valley of dryness valley of death valley of wilderness translation of beka it means all these things things it's a place of dryness it's a place of destruction a place of wilderness the image in verse six is so clear as christians we all know the reality of verse six those hard days hard weeks hard years spiritually dry times perhaps physically or mentally hard times of illness pain spiritual pain perhaps at times all three combined times where we just feel as if we can't go on anymore we come to verse six and we see that first of all the lord acknowledges that these times exist there are times of dryness there are times of the lord knows it when his people will go through the valley of beka there are times we must go through this awful draining painful reality but note the wording who passing through the valley of beka now not for a second are we saying that this is advice we give to those who are suffering to the person who is going through a hard time we don't say to worry it will pass by soon we can't say that we don't know that what do we say to a suffering christian who is facing loss or facing pain facing illness what does the lord say to us perhaps if we're going through a situation just now that is dark and is very dark we pass through it we will pass through it but the truth is the christian but that is the truth the guarantee of passing through it might not be till we see him in glory we know ourselves there's some christians who seem to have a life of hardship from the day they are saved to the day they leave this place that they have a hard and challenging life but for them as for us the promise is the same they will pass through they will be saved by their god he will take them home to be with himself we see that as they pass through the valley they make it a well the reality here is that even in the hearts of times as christians by our witness and by our existence by god working in us and through us he will cause water as it were to appear the dryness rain also fills the pools for those who have gone

through situations which are difficult and perhaps complicated and dark yourselves will know the reality that looking back and often is looking back you will see how the lord even used at times unbelievably tough situations somehow for his glory and we all i'm sure as christians and as believers can spirit amen to that reality in our own ways and in our own situations that god will make even a place of dryness a place of pain he will somehow in his glory and for his purposes he will use that for our good and for his glory we come through the place of dryness to verse 7 and what happens then we go from strength to strength here we have the eternal hope every one of them in zion appeareth before the god brothers and sisters this is the gospel reality for us we pass through the valley either now in life or at the end of our life either way as christians we will face our journey and our final destination will be where in verse 7 our final destination as believers is to appear before god in zion regardless of the journey regardless of how that journey is for us the truth and the hope we have the sure hope we have is we will appear before god in zion again look at the wording every one of them every one of them in a sense this is too wordy that every one of them doesn't need to be there for this to make sense but god in his wisdom there's no wasted words in scripture god puts this here for us why to remind us once more that every single one of these thousands of travelers doing the same journey every single one of them every single one of them are known to him are precious to him and he will lose not a single one of them every one of them in zion appeareth before god brothers and sisters that is our hope as we carry on our journey but the truth is that we know we don't and with this we can come to a conclusion we we know ourselves that our journey is not depending on our efforts our journey doesn't depend on how hard or how well prepared we are for the journey our journey depends on the reality of of verse 8 and more particular verse 9 verse 8 just leads us to verse 9 verse 9 where those traveling on this journey their prayer says behold oh god our shield and look upon the face of thine anointed what are we praying for here what is our prayer what is the prayer of these people as they traveled to their place before god at times we know that as people traveled that the lord would would instruct them that the people would have a king or a high priest and we covered this before looking at psalm 126 in passing the image here is that the king of a high priest would go before the people and he was as it were a shield the thought was when god looked on this rag tag bunch of travelers broken and tired and exhausted and stinking and everything else have been traveling for weeks through a desert god would see them i would see in front of them the king of the high priest or whoever would be there to represent them and he wouldn't see them in their dirt and in their misery and their pain he would just see the one in front of them brothers sisters we know the reality of verse 9 in our life don't we who goes before us in

our walk who has gone before us in our journey who has gone to make a place for us behold oh god our shield and look upon the face of thine anointed anointed that same word that comes into the greek we all know this we're all greek experts in this word what does that word translate to in the greek anointed christos lord our shield oh god our shield and look upon the face of thine christos of the anointed one look upon the face of jesus is that not our hope as christians to go about our daily lives as you work through our lives as we go on our journey home our saviour has gone before us us and god hasn't just looked on him he has placed on him the full punishment the full wrath of all the sins of all his people so we can travel this journey without fear at the end of it at the end of our journey brothers and sisters because he has gone before us because he has promised not to lose a single one of us because he is the anointed one because he is our shield our journey is guaranteed the path home is not guaranteed the twists and turns are not known to us but the destination is guaranteed our arrival there one day as brothers and sisters is guaranteed because his place before us does not change he has gone before us as it were into the city into the temple and we go on after him because he has gone to prepare a place for us we can follow him with hope with certainty with joy take time perhaps this evening or this is a week to go with this psalm yourselves there's so much more beauty in this psalm but time has has gone so quickly ask donnie please leave in a word of prayer thank youów