

Psalm 84

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[0 : 00] Well, we're going to turn to that reading, the book of Psalms and Psalm number 84.

I'll just read the opening and the closing verses of the Psalm. 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. Then verse 11, for the Lord God is a sun and shield.

The Lord bestows favor and honor. No good thing does he withhold from those who walk uprightly. O Lord of hosts, blessed is the one who trusts.

In you. Singing is a particular human feature.

[1 : 10] It's unique to human beings. We talk about the birds singing, but they're not really singing at all. They're just making a rather pleasant noise. They're not really singing. Their singing is only what they do by instinct.

There's no words. There's no communication. There's not really the kind of melody that we have in the human race. You'll find it in every culture.

You'll find it in going back all through the centuries, right back to the very beginning of time. I believe it was a quality that was placed in our hearts and in our capability by God as part of our humanness.

And I believe the purpose of that was to express from the depths of our heart in a beautiful and in a melodious manner what God meant to us.

Now, of course, that's not to say that singing cannot be adapted to other things. And, of course, you find poetry being put into song all over the world. And there's a whole history and a whole culture of poetry and song which you can study and which you don't even need to study.

[2 : 16] Everyone, I'm sure, everyone here has their favorite song, something that means something to them, something that brings them all the way back. I can listen to one particular song, and as soon as I hear it, I remember when I was 12 years old or even earlier.

It does something for us. Song does something for us. It awakens us. It arouses us. It prizes open our emotions. That's why some people can't listen to a song without crying, without the tears running down.

What is it about a song or a melody or the words that produces such an emotional effect? Well, all of that was placed in the human race by the Lord himself.

And song is good now like everything else that God has given us. Because some songs are bad songs. Some music is bad music. Some singers are bad. They've abused this wonderful gift to express all kinds of horrible things.

And I would challenge you tonight, particularly young people, I would challenge you. What kind of music do you listen to? If you're a Christian tonight, are you prepared to just allow anything to just seep into your soul?

[3 : 25] Or are you prepared to say, no, I can't listen to that. I can't because it just, well, because either it's blasphemy or because it's offensive to me as a Christian or because it introduces my mind to ideas and subjects and scenarios which just are so ugly.

Now, I know that you can't get a perfect song. There's going to be. It's not easy to draw the line between what is good and what is bad in this world. But remember what the Apostle Paul tells us. That whatsoever things are true and good and of good report, that's what we're to hold on to. And that's what we're to make the most of. And we thank God today that there is much good in this world.

And there is much good by way of poetry and art and literature and even song, even modern song. Some people think that there is something elevated about classical music.

I'm not sure if I would agree with that because there were just as many rogues who were composers in classical music just as there are rogues who are composers of modern music.
[4 : 27] You can't say that one is necessarily by itself better than the other. But I'm not going to go any further into this argument because I'll get tied up in knots. I'm concentrating tonight on this song in which the psalmist who has written these words from his heart.

And you can't help but notice the passion and the sincerity. You notice the subject of this song. The subject is God's house.

And it's a song that we sing tonight because it's just as relevant tonight in the 21st century to us as it was way back before during the time of the psalmist, way back into the Old Testament.

And it is that passion with which we sing praise tonight and every time I hope we come to the house of God.

Because song is that particular manner, that particular method, I'm not sure if that's the right word, with which we express our heartfelt praise to God.

[5 : 40] And we're commanded to do so. Sing to the Lord a new song. And we're commanded to do so passionately and loudly and melodiously. We're commanded to worship God in spirit and in truth.

That's what God looks for in his worshipping people, in his singing people. And I hope that as we were singing that psalm, that you not only were singing the words, but it really, truly meant something to you.

How lovely is your dwelling place, O Lord, of hosts to me. And only a Christian can sing those words. If you're not a Christian tonight, well, you might be emotionally attached to church and to the gospel.

You might know that it's the right place to be. But one thing you can't say within your soul, this is the place I want to be. And here is the God I want to meet with all my heart.

There's nothing else in the world I want to do but to worship God this evening. Because I love him because he has first loved me. And so we can sing these words with all our heart.

[6 : 50] But do we understand them? That's my question tonight. Do we understand what we're singing? And as always, like every other part of the Bible, we need to come and we need to study it together to try. And as we grow in our understanding, we'll grow in our love for what we're singing.

And so that we'll sing it with an even greater passion and an even greater energy and an even greater sense of what we are doing when we're coming to sing to the Lord.

Well, one weakness, let me say, in singing the Psalms is that we don't sing all of the Psalm.

By rights, if we were really going to do justice to any particular Psalm, we would have to sing the whole thing. Because the whole Psalm is a unit.

84 is a unit. And when we split the Psalms the way we do, and of course it's necessary to do that.

We don't have time, for example, to sing Psalm 119 or even Psalm 118.

[7 : 58] But when we split a Psalm, we're kind of destroying it in a way because we're not allowing it as a whole to speak to us and to reach into it as a whole.

Now, I'm not saying that we shouldn't split the Psalm. We have to. But we're doing an injustice, I believe, in doing that. And it's one of these things that we're limited by time and by constraint.

So, what I want us to do tonight is to see how this Psalm, what it says to us and what I believe that the Lord, because it's his word, is saying to us.

And when you come to trying to understand a Psalm, you have to understand where it divides. And I want us to suggest to you tonight that there are three divisions in Psalm 84.

And each one of these divisions centers around the word blessed. Remember what that word blessed means? It means the kind of happiness that we can only experience in God.

[9 : 11] This is not the kind of temporary, superficial happiness that men and women will try to find in the world around them through all kinds of methods. That's not the kind of happiness the Bible talks about.

This is the peculiar, unique kind of happiness that we can only find in God. So that if you are a follower of Jesus tonight, you have that blessedness, which God calls blessed, that happiness that God calls blessedness.

So then the first thing we're going to do then is we're going to look at how the Psalm divides itself.

And I want to suggest to you that the first blessed is found in verse 4, and it refers to all that has gone before.

Verse 4, blessed are those who dwell in your house. That's the first thing. And the focus is on what the psalmist calls the house of God or God's dwelling place.

That's the first thing. The second one is found in verse 5, and it refers to the words that follow.

Blessed are those whose strength is in you.

[10:16] And now the focus is on the Christian life or the difficulties that people experience as they try to live the Christian life and as they try to look to God as their help and as their Savior.

And then the third one is found in verse 12 at the very end of the psalm. Blessed is the one who trusts in you. And now the focus is on our individual relationship with God that's expressed in verse 9, for example.

Behold our shield, O God, look on the face of your anointed. For the Lord God is a sun and a shield. The Lord bestows favor and honor. No good thing does he withhold from those who walk uprightly. Well, let's just try very briefly tonight and to try and unpack what these three blessed areas are. First of all, blessed are those who dwell in your house.

He begins by describing how lovely the house of God or the tabernacle is to him. And we're left wondering, why? What is he describing?

[11:21] Why is it that this place, which in actual fact, he wasn't able to get into unless he was a priest? Unless he was amongst those privileged persons who were able to, he wasn't able to get into the tabernacle or the temple whenever it was in the history of Israel.

So why does this place mean so much to him? And what is he describing? Is he describing the building? If he lived before Solomon, he'd be describing the tabernacle, the tent church to which the children of Israel would come and which they would conduct their worship.

If it was after Solomon, it was the temple which Solomon built, which was a grand and magnificent building. But I want to suggest to you tonight that he's not describing the outside of a building.

Neither is he describing even the act of worship in which everyone gathers together. He's talking about what the temple represented to him and to Israel.

In other words, the temple meant everything to the psalmist because of what it meant, because of what God was doing in the temple.

[12:53] Now remember that in the temple, the glory of God dwelt. And that was what the temple was all about. That was what the tabernacle was all about. When Moses had the tabernacle built, you remember that the very end of Exodus, the glory of the Lord filled the most holy place.

That was the key. And here was God, as it were, coming down from heaven to make his dwelling place and to live with his people.

It was God among us. And the psalmist knew either from the outside or perhaps on occasions from the inside if he was a priest. Then he knew that the temple contained the glory of God.

And that by going into the temple, he was coming into the very presence of God himself. And that's why this psalm is so relevant for you and for me tonight.

Because just as God came down to dwell with his people in the Old Testament, So in the person of Jesus Christ, God has come down to this world as one of us to dwell amongst us.

[14:05] That's what the apostle said when he said, We beheld his glory. The glory as of the only begotten of the Father. And every time he looked at Jesus after the penny had dropped, And after he had come to discover that Jesus truly was God in human nature, Every time he looked at the face of Jesus, he was looking at the face of God.

And every time we look at the face of Jesus as we read the Bible, And as we discover more about him, we're looking at the face of God. And we can say too, we behold, we look, we gaze at the glory of God in the person of Jesus Christ.

And so as we sing those words, We're not singing about Kenna Street. We're not singing about this building when we sing, How lovely is your dwelling place?

It doesn't matter what kind of building we have. And too often, church buildings have become an object of worship themselves. That's wrong. It doesn't matter what kind of building we have.

What matters is the God to whom we come to worship. That's what we're singing about. The dwelling place of God is actually the Lord Jesus Christ.

[15:20] And when we sing, How lovely is your dwelling place? We're singing, How lovely to me is Jesus Christ. He is my dwelling place. He's the God who has come to dwell among us.

And we behold his glory. And when a person becomes a Christian, And I would say, Even before, God places a certain sense of hunger in our hearts.

A longing that only he can satisfy. And that's what the psalmist is describing. My soul longs. It faints for the courts of the Lord.

My heart and flesh sing for joy to the living God. He's talking about the gospel. And how God has transformed him by bringing him into his fellowship.

And by changing his heart and his life. That's what it means to be a Christian. A changed person. A person who's born again. And so that before, Like you kind of didn't have any time for God.

[16:22] Or God was no, It certainly wasn't a source of joy to you. Now, God is the very center of your existence and your life. And God has placed a longing and a, And a, And a fainting for the courts of the Lord.

And you've discovered that you need God more than anything else. Or anyone else in this world. I wonder if you've discovered that this evening. And if that hunger has started, It's begun. And if tonight, Perhaps like never before, You sense Your need For God.

Then can I say to you, Then you keep going. You keep seeking. Knock, And it shall be open to you. Seek, And you will find. Ask, And you will receive.

Is there that longing, That sense of emptiness that draws you? It's like a hunger. You know where you go when you need food? You go to where there is food. It's like when you feel hungry.

If you're traveling in the car, On the mainland, For example, And you see a cafe, Or a restaurant, Or whatever, And you want to go in there. Because you feel that sense of hunger.

[17:32] And it's the same, Or even greater, A greater sense, When God places that longing in our hearts. And there's two, There's two examples that the psalmist gives us, In verse 3 and verse 4.

Or rather, Verse 3, I should say, From ornithology, I guess, Is the word that we would use, To describe the actions of birds, The kind of species he talks about.

He talks about a sparrow and a swallow. Now it's obvious, I think, That the psalmist was probably, In the course of his being in the tabernacle, Or the temple, He was looking, And he obviously saw a bird.

You know how sometimes, You know how sometimes, In a big empty building is possible, Even for this building, A bird could fly in the door, And unbeknown to anyone, It could build a nest, Somewhere up in the rafters, Or whatever, It's very possible, It happens elsewhere, It happens, It happens quite often.

And I guess that's what happened there, As well, That, And he saw that, As a kind of picture, Of the goodness of God, In providing a home, For his creatures, In his own house, But I can't help thinking also, That in the swallow, And the sparrow, There's a description, Of two kinds of people, Who have found rest, By coming to Jesus Christ, Maybe I'm reading too much into it, I don't think I am, A swallow, Is a restless bird, I don't know anything about ornithology, But they tell me, That a swallow flicks, From one place to another, And you've seen them before, Haven't you?

[19:15] It doesn't seem to, To spend five minutes, In any one given place, It's always flying, From here to there, And it's always on the go, Relentless energy, You wonder, Does it ever sleep?

The swallow is a bird, It doesn't just sit like an owl, Have you ever seen an owl, And you sit, You see the owl, It just sits there, And all it moves, Is its head, They tell me, That it's looking for food, But a swallow, Is completely different, It cannot, Be content, Is flitting about, From one place to another, There are people like that, Trying, Their whole lives, Seeking rest, Seeking peace, And looking in all the wrong places for it, Is that you tonight?

As you look back over your life, Are you a swallow? Going from place to place, Trying this, Trying that, Seeking this, Seeking that, Trying to figure out, How you can be content, And happy, In your life, And here we're told, This is your resting place, The gospel of Jesus Christ, God, Has provided, What you are looking for, In Jesus Christ, And the reason you're restless, Is because your sin, Our sin, Has separated us from God, Which means that, We are restless, Until we find, A rest in God, I want to speak to anybody, Who's restless tonight, Here's the answer, The other bird, Is a sparrow, Sparrow, Was worthless, Sparrow, Even today, Was a sparrow,

It's the ordinary, Common, Worthless bird, In the Bible, Jesus said, Two sparrows, Were sold for, The lowest amount, You could ever, A farthing, A tiny little coin, Two sparrows, Ten a penny, You know, There's some people, In this world, And as far as they're concerned, They're worthless, That's the way, They look upon themselves, Perhaps they've, Grown up in a home, Where they're made to feel, Worthless, There are people, Many, Many people, You would be amazed, At how many people, There are in this world, Who, Because of their background, Perhaps, Or their particular, Vulnerable personality, They've grown up, To think of themselves, As just, Dirt, I guess

that kind of, Describes the two ends, Of the human spectrum,
On the one hand, You get the person, Who's, Who's flitting about, From one place, Hyperactively,
That's the swallow, On the other hand, You get the person, Who just wants to, Crawl away, And
hide, From everyone else, Because they rethink, Nothing of themselves, Now that's not, I'm not
talking about, A person who's truly, Humble, I'm talking about, A person who, Who, Has lost sight,
Of their human worth, Well God, Is where we find, Our human worth, And our individual worth, God
says, You are, You are, My, My, Creation, You are created, In my image, And you will, Really find,
Your worth, In fact, You will only, Find your worth, In me, Am I talking, To a sparrow, Is the bible,
Talking to a sparrow, Tonight, This is where, God, God, Provides for us, And speaks to us, And
opens up,

[23 : 02] Our heart, And calls us, To be his child, And his, The person, Who, Who is, Who he can,
Restore, Back to that sense, Of worth, Again, Well that's the first thing, Those who dwell in your
house, Those whose strength is in you, Verse five, And here, We're changing the scene altogether,
Beforehand, We were looking, At the house of God, Or we were gazing, At the place, Where God
revealed himself, Now, We're going on the road, As it were, Blessed is them, Are those whose
strength, Is in you, Whose, In whose heart, Are the highways, To Zion, In other words, The scene is
changing, All together, And the psalmist, Is now going, And he's one of, A whole bunch of people, A
group of people, Who are making their way, In Israel, Through the desert, From their homes, From
their villages, And they're making their way, To Zion, Where they're going, To worship, Probably in
some feast,

Or sacrifice, Or Passover, Or whatever, And they used to travel, By groups, For safety, For security,
And they would have to travel, In, In the, In various different places, One of them being, The valley,
Of Beka, What does the valley, Of Beka mean?

Well the scholars tell me, That it means, One of two things, That either means, The valley of tears,
Or the valley, Of dryness, The valley of tears, Apparently the word, Is from the mulberry tree, And if
you cut a leaf, Of a mulberry tree, You can see the drop, Like a tear, Appearing, From the cut, And
many as a Christian, Who knows, What this valley, Is all about, A valley of tears, Where events,
Happenings, Experiences, In their own lives, Sad, Dark experiences, Have reduced them, To
brokenness, And to a sense, Of hopelessness, And despair, Even Christians, Don't think for a
moment, That when you're a Christian, God lifts you out, Of trouble, He doesn't, God doesn't make
us,

Immune, To the sadness, And the bereavement, And the illnesses, That other people suffer,
Around us, He doesn't become, A wall around them, So that they never, Suffer anything, Many as a
Christian, Has been reduced, To a sense, Of his own, Utter weakness, Because of things, That
have happened, To him, And there is a valley, Could be a valley, Of dryness as well, That's
another, Meaning of the word, A valley of dryness, And many as a Christian, Knows, The dryness,
That there is, Compared to, When he started off, On the road, When he was full of joy, And
strength, And power, And when he had, Every intention, To do everything, And to work for the Lord,
And to commit himself, To the Lord, Ah, It's one thing, To say that, And to intend to do it, It's another
thing, To keep going, As you keep going, On the road, Of faith, And very often, You're reduced, To
almost nothing,

Where you lose sight, Of the presence of God, Where you lose sight, Of the power, Of the word of
God, You can open your, You can open your Bible, And it's like, The words are strange, And that
love, That passion, That you once knew, For the Savior, Now seems to be shaking, And it now
seems, To have crumbled, Do you know what?

[27 : 00] You're not alone, You're not alone, I've met, Loads of people, In my Christian ministry,
Who have told me that, And it's important, To know, When it's happening, And it's important, To
know, That God's, Love, And his, Commitment, To his people, Will never, Ever, Change, And to lay
hold, Upon that, Whatever we're feeling, Whether we feel, A sense, Of assurance, Of God's love,
Or not, We sometimes, Have to simply, Take God, At his word, Like nothing, Can separate us,
From the love of God,

In Christ Jesus, Like the words, That we have been singing, He heals, His people's, Broken hearts,
Restores, The bruised, And lame, He sets the number, Of the stars, And calls them, Each by name,
Great is our Lord, And great in power, His wisdom is profound, The Lord sustains the meek, But
casts the wicked, To the ground, You know, There are times, In our Christian lives, Where you can
read that, And not feel a thing, But that doesn't change, Their truth, You simply have to lay hold, Of

them, Come what may, This is what God, Is saying to me, And he will never, Ever, Depart from his word, That's what faith is, Faith is not, What we feel, Faith, Is simply taking hold, Of God's word, And simply believing it, Because, It is God's word, And you know, What it says here, One of the most interesting things, About this psalm, Is that it tells us,

That when we go through, These experiences, They can actually, Become a blessing, To other people, When they, Go through, These experiences, We can, By our example, Be a blessing, To other people, And we have to remember that, That God is active, And he's working, And that he, Is doing in us, And for us, More than we can ask, Or even think, And now the last, Part of the psalmist, Is found, It's summed up in verse 12, Lord of hosts, Blessed is the one, Who trusts in you, And now it's as if, The psalmist is looking up to heaven, And he's gazing, Into heaven, And he's saying in verse 9, Behold our shield, O God, Look on the face, Of your anointed, What does that mean? What does verse 9 mean? Look on the face, Of your anointed, He's at, This is his prayer, Look on the face, Of your anointed, Is quite intriguing, Isn't it?

It's quite a mystery, What does that mean? Who is his anointed? Who is he talking, He's talking to God, He's speaking directly to God, And he's asking God, To look on the face, Of his anointed, Now I've no doubt whatsoever, But that in, Originally, That would have meant, To look on the face, Of the king, The king of Israel, But we know, That when this term, His anointed, Is used in the Bible, It means, Messiah, That's what it means, It literally means, The anointed one, The Messiah, So when we sing this psalm, We're asking God, To look on the face, Of his Messiah, What does it mean, To look on the face, Of his Messiah, Well do you know, What happens, When you're in conversation, With someone, You're looking at their face, When they're telling you, Something important, You're looking at them, As they're talking to you, When you're talking to them, You're looking at their face, [31 : 01] And so the psalmist, Is talking about, He's speaking about, A conversation, Between God and God, He doesn't understand, What he's saying, The Holy Spirit, Has put it into his heart, To write these words, He doesn't know, What we know, In the New Testament, But what it means is, That in heaven, There are two persons, Of the Godhead, Well we know, That there are three, But we're talking, About two persons, Their father and the son, And the son is sitting, At the right hand of the father, He's the anointed one, Jesus is the anointed one, And they're in conversation, How do I know that, Because the apostle tells me, In the New Testament, He tells me, That I have a great high priest, Sitting at the right hand of God, Where he ever lives, To make intercession for me, Do you know, What intercession means, It's a conversation, It's a conversation, Picture tonight, In heaven, The throne of God, And the father, And the son, And they are in conversation, One is looking at the other, The other is looking at the one,

They are in deep, Intense, Fervent conversation, Do you know, What the subject is? Us, That's what the apostle says, He says, He ever lives, To make intercession, For us, For us, For us, For us, For us, For us, For us, The God of the universe, And he is in conference tonight, With his son, And they're talking about us, Talking about you, What you're going through, At this moment, Into the struggles, That you are having, Do you think God is separate from that?

Do you think God detaches himself? Do you think he says to you tonight, You go off and live your own Christian life, And we'll see how you get on? Not at all. God is intimately, Integrally attached, To us, And all our experiences, In this world.

That's what he promises us, He promises us, His interest, His fervent interest, But he also promises us, His presence, His company, His help, And his strength, For us, In time of need.

He ever lives, To make intercession for us. Can we sing those words? Of course we can sing them. Look on the face, Of your anointed. He ever lives, To make intercession for us.

[33 : 39] And he tells us, As he grows, In his passion, For what he's singing, 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.

I wonder if we can say that tonight. I'd rather be a Christian, Than anywhere else, On anyone else, In this world. Because I found, Like Jesus talks about, The man who found, The pearl of great price. That's what we have, If we belong to Jesus Christ. And it ends with, The Lord our God, Is a sun and a shield. And I'm going to end with this. The Lord our God, Is a sun and a shield.

He bestows favor and honor, No good thing, Does he withhold, From those who walk uprightly. And of course, The Bible goes on to explain to us, That those who walk uprightly, Are those who walk, And live by faith, In Jesus Christ.

He withholds nothing. What a marvelous promise, To go out into, The problems that we have, In our place of work. The conflicts that we have, In our communities, And in our neighborhoods, And amongst our friends, And amongst our families, And in our homes.

[34 : 55] The difficulties, The intense, Excruciating difficulties, That some of you have. And those of us, Who perhaps don't have them right now, Will have them, One day.

I can't think of a greater promise, To lay hold of tonight, In preparation for an uncertain week, Here it is, No good thing, Does he withhold.

No good, Remember that. No good thing, Does he withhold. That means, That means, You can't look at the next person, And say, Well that person, Is such a good Christian, He has something, That I don't have.

No he doesn't. And if he appears, To be a stronger Christian, Than you, You don't know, What his weaknesses are.

You don't know, What he has to go through, In secret. What you know is this, No good thing, Does he withhold, From those who walk uprightly, God has blessed us, With every, Spiritual blessing, In Christ Jesus.

[36 : 16] Every, Spiritual blessing. I'm going to finish at that, Let's pray.■■■.