

4 addresses on 3 Psalms

Part 3

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[00:00:00] Would you turn, please, to Psalm 84.

Psalm 84 How amiable are thy tabernacles, O Lord of hosts! My soul longeth, yea, even fainteth, for the courts of the Lord. My heart and my flesh crieth out for the living God. Yea, the sparrow hath found an house, and the swallow a nest for herself, [00:01:01] where she may lay her young, even thine altars, O Lord of hosts, my King and my God. Blessed are they that dwell in thy house, they will be still praising thee, Selah. Blessed is the man whose strength is in thee, in whose heart are the ways of them, who, passing through the valley of Baker, make it a well. The rain also filleth the pools.

They go from strength to strength. Every one of them in Zion appeareth before God. O Lord God of hosts, hear my prayer.

Give ear, O God of Jacob, Selah.

Behold, O God, our shield, and look upon the face of thine anointed. [00:02:01] For a day in thy courts is better than a thousand. I had rather be a doorkeeper in the house of my God than to dwell in the tents of wickedness. For the Lord God is a sun and shield.

The Lord will give grace and glory. No good thing will he withhold from them that walk uprightly. O Lord of hosts, blessed is the man that trusteth in thee.

Psalm 84 is located in the third book of Psalms, from 73 to 89, and therefore corresponds with the third book of Moses, Leviticus, the book of the sanctuary, the book of approach to God.

[00:03:05] And this is fairly readily traced through.

Indeed, if you just turn back to Psalm 73, and we trace through some of the threads that demonstrate this, it can be easily checked out. Psalm 73, verse 17, I went into the sanctuary of God. 28, it is good for me to draw near to God.

Psalm 74, end of verse 3, the sanctuary.

Verse 7, thy sanctuary, the dwelling place of thy name. 75, verse 9, I will sing praises to the God of

Jacob. 76, verse 2, in Solom also is his tabernacle and his dwelling place in Zion. [00:04:06] 77, verse 13, thy way, O God, is in the sanctuary. 78, verse 54, he brought them to the border of his sanctuary. 60, the tabernacle of Shiloh, the tent which he placed among men. Verse 69, he built his sanctuary.

Psalms 79, verse 1, thy holy temple.

Verse 13, we thy people and sheep of thy pasture will give thee thanks forever. We will show forth thy praise to all generations. Psalm 80, verse 1, thou that dwellest between the cherubim.

The first three verses really of Psalm 81, then in Psalm 82, the opening part, [00:05:05] God standeth in the congregation of the mighty. 83, verse 12, the houses of God. 86, verse 9, all nations whom thou hast made shall come and worship before thee, O Lord, and shall glorify thy name. Verse 12, I will praise thee, O Lord my God. 87, verse 1, his foundation is in the holy mountains. 89, verse 14, the habitation of thy throne.

Verse 20, my holy oil.

Verse 35, I have sworn by my holiness, and so on.

So we can see that the whole mood of this third book of Psalms [00:06:01] relates to drawing near in a sense of the holiness of God and yet with that serenity of heart and soul that enables that welling up in praise and worship and thanksgiving. Now, in about the center of this third book then, we have Psalm 84.

And again, the Psalm itself is replete with similar phrases. We shall be looking at some of the detail, but a cursory glance right at the outset shows in verse 1, thy tabernacles.

Verse 2, the courts of the Lord. Verse 3, thine altars.

Verse 4, thy house. Verse 10, thy courts.

And again, the house of my God.

[00:07:02] Here then, we have a Psalm which tells us that it is possible and that it is God's intent that there should be those upon earth who are in right relationship with him, moving on to the moment when they shall ever be with him, but in the sense of all that he is and all that he has done for his glory and their blessing, that they can be found independent as they move through this world on their way to the house of God in the ultimate sense of the term and the kind of thought that go through their mind and give caliber and substance to the praise that they offer. Now, we read the heading as well as the Psalm.

[00:08:01] As always, in the Psalms, the heading is part of the inspired text and we need to consider the detail of this before we go down verse by verse. To the chief musician, it is consistent with its location in the third book of Psalms that the Psalm is said to concern the chief musician.

Many individuals are referred to in the headings of the Psalms here and there, but this heading, this introduction to the chief musician is used more prolifically than any other heading. In well over 50, about 55 of the Psalms have this as their heading. No doubt, it is one of the major reasons why the

book as a whole is called the book of Psalms, [00:09:09] the book of praises, the book of response to God as a result of a sense of all that God is, as a result of passing through experiences of this life, pleasant and in many times painful, with a sense of the presence of God. The chief musician used more than any other heading. Carrying with it the thought, no doubt culled from the tabernacle system and the temple system, with this thought in mind, that there is one appointed by God not only as a conductor of the praises to gather the threads together, but the one who is the originator of the theme, [00:10:03] the instructor of the singers, and the one who coordinates all the praise that arises to God. And something of this comes through in the heading of the chief musician. Now, while this is true in a general sense, and no doubt David and others throughout the Psalms were impressed by this again and again, it is when we take the prophetic aspect of the Psalms, in general and in particular, that we begin to get a sense that even in our day it is God's intent that the praises of his beloved people here upon earth, on our way home to him, should be filled with a sense that there is one who is both the inspiration of the music, [00:11:04] the theme of the praise itself, the object of the worship, and the true minister of the sanctuary. And of course that is a phrase which is used specifically of our Lord Jesus Christ in Hebrews chapter 8 and verse 2.

So whether we take it as an indication in advance of conditions in the assembly, whether we take it as a picture of that which will surely be true amongst those who even in advance of the world to come in difficult days are given a present sense of the praise that can arise from those who are true to God as a result of their going through difficult times [00:12:01] in company with the God who blesses them. We can see that there is force in each of these things. Going through this Psalm and the others which bear a similar or the same heading, there is always the sense that praise is only possible because a work has been done which has answered every claim of God and consequent upon that and subsequent to it in the sense of the completed work and the value to God of that work of redemption that praise can arise to him. Now we get that from this term to the chief musician. It also comes through in this next little word, get it. Of course most of us, myself included, have to rely on the scholarship of others. [00:13:02] We have the word of God, we have the spirit, we have an unction from the Holy One, we have a discernment, a spiritual discretion, we have the mind of Christ, we can read and hear what others have said, we can use our spiritual judgement and we can get help. We can filter out that which is according to God, accept it, make use of it and if there is anything that we don't happy to receive, we put that to one side.

Now those who demonstrated themselves to be spiritual as well as scholarly tell us that we can pursue two separate avenues when we think of this word, get it. There is no doubt that history records [00:14:01] that there was a musical instrument by that or a similar name in the area round about Gath, a location that David and others knew in times of persecution and there is no doubt that David, the sweet psalmist of Israel and others knew what it was to have balm provided and supplied to their souls in difficult times as they played their musical instruments, as they chanted their thoughts aloud to their God and they went over their experiences and the wisdom that they had gained from those experiences even while they were on the run in times of persecution. There is no doubt also that the word also has a derivation [00:15:04] connected with the wine presses of the same area, that there was wine produced as a result of the crushing of the grapes. What we can readily check is that the scriptures are consistent in telling us that it is God's desire that true joy should be experienced in the souls of those who know him. It is wine that make of glad the heart of man, the psalmist said in another psalm. The Lord Jesus, when he gave those eight signs that he was the son of God, the first sign that he gave in Cana of Galilee was that he turned the water into wine. Not the waters of judgment but the spiritual joy [00:16:04] was that which he intended that his people should ever enjoy. And so we come again as often in the Psalms that there is no experience of life that our God allows

us to go through. Whatever pressure is exerted upon us, there is none without the intent that we should learn something about ourselves and something about our God, which will allow us under pressure to develop the spiritual qualities that will be able to enter into the joy of the Lord, which will give us and furnish us with substance for praise in his presence. To the chief musician upon Gittite.

A psalm for the sons of Korah.

[00:17:13] Who were these privileged people?

What were their personal qualities?

What had they done to deserve the favor of being found in the presence of God, participating in the service of praise? Scripture gives the answer. They didn't deserve it at all.

They deserved nothing but condemnation and death. When we read Numbers 16, Numbers 26, we get the immediate impression that here were those who were rebels, opposed to the will of God [00:18:02] and those whom God had appointed to serve him, rebelling in their day against the very idea that Moses and Aaron should officiate in the service of God because God had said that they should. A remarkable thing that Scripture records later in 1 Chronicles, that when the number of those who were privileged to be in the number counted as the people of God, there is a reference to the fact that there were children of Korah who had been preserved as a result of the mercy of God being showered upon them. And there they were taking their place in the praises of their God with the ever-present sense [00:19:02] that they were there not because they deserved it, not because of any achievement of their own, but because in the mercy of God they had been preserved as an ever-present witness to the faithfulness of God to himself that he would ever preserve the reminder that none of us in any day or dispensation can be found praising our God, enjoying his presence and communion with him as a result of any works of righteousness that we have done. No doubt our thoughts inevitably go to Titus there. Yes, not by any works of righteousness have we been saved, but according to his wonderful mercy. Let us distinguish again as usual.

Mercy delivers us from what we do deserve.

Grace bestows upon us [00:20:02] something we could never deserve. Well, we have been delivered from the judgment of God against our sins as a result of his wonderful mercy. Wherever this term, and it comes into several of the Psalms, there is an account of the mercy of God delivering those who are in desperate need, bringing them to himself in order that they might enjoy praising in his presence the sons of Korah. Well, having looked at the help that we can get from the heading of the psalm, we can move into the detail of the psalm and its sections with this thought in mind.

If we've learned the lesson of the heading, [00:21:01] yes, the Lord Jesus Christ is the true minister of the sanctuary, of the true tabernacle which God pitched and not man.

It's also true, the same book of Hebrews records, that the one who became positionally a little lower than the angels for the suffering of death, the true Benoni, is the one who is also deservedly crowned with glory and with honor, the true Benjamin. Sorrow entered into, honor bestowed, suffering because he was the only one good enough to take it upon himself. Honor and glory, the only one who so deserves it. [00:22:02] And so we look at these twelve lovely verses. Now, if we want to give some little sections to them, they fall very readily into three sets of four verses each. We can look at the first four

verses and we can see an indication of the privileges of the house of God. We can look at verses five to eight and we can see some indication of what it means to make progress in the things of God. Verses nine to twelve tell us what it is to be so dependent and to see what God is doing and to enjoy the sense of protection under the hand of God. Now, there's one very interesting parallel here among others.

[00:23:01] The order in which these three sections come are in the same order and they have a similar trend as we get in 1 John 2 verses 12 to the end of the chapter. We get an account there of the stages of advancement towards spiritual maturity that God intends that we make in our progress through the world. That being brought into the family, verse 12, 1 John 2, 12, your sins are forgiven you for his name's sake. We are brought into the family of God when our sins are forgiven. After that, we are instructed that the fullest, richest stage of Christian maturity is likened to that of fathers in their families. [00:24:02] After a little while, we are instructed that the health, strength, energy and vigour applicable to the young man's stage of life is something to enter into and go in for on the way to that stage of fuller maturity. But even those who are mere novices in Christ are looked upon as little children recipients of the instruction of God. Now, we could well align those up with these and say that verses 1 to 4 in delineating some of the privileges of the house of God give us some indication of the qualities and functions of the fathers. Verses 5 to 8 in this progress in the things of God some of the things that might be a parallel to the young men of 1 John 2. [00:25:02] And the protection under the hand of God in verses 9 to 12 are things that even the little children spiritually speaking can ever enjoy.

Well, and so we look at some of these details. How amiable, how pleasant are thy tabernacles O Lord of hosts.

Some of us were looking last Saturday at Psalm 22.

We were considering for a moment what is involved in the statement there.

Thou art holy, thou that inhabitest the praises of thy people.

The intent declared early in that Psalm that God's desire has ever been [00:26:01] that he should be at home dwelling amongst his people and that they should be indulging in praises to him. And here we have a similar thought. How amiable are thy tabernacles O Lord of hosts. What a pleasant thing it is to be at home in the presence of God and that God can enjoy being at home in the midst of his people. Now we learned in Psalm 22 that if that were to be achieved and enjoyed it involved the abandonment of the perfect man, the holy, subject, dependent Son of God and we shall see certainly something of that coming through. It's certainly indicated in what we've considered the rebellious sons of Korah could only be involved in the praise of God [00:27:02] as a result of the exercise of the mercy of God because the claims of God have been fully met and the mercy of God could freely flow.

Now when we look down to verse 3 we can see that there is this indication here that the claims of God have been fully met. If in verse 1 the tabernacles are there if in verse 2 the courts of the Lord are available it's because that which is according to the altar of God the righteous, holy claims of God have been fully met. The authority and the majesty and the power and the omnipotence of God have been fully met as he's able to say, O Lord of hosts, my King, my God.

[00:28:01] We in our day can ever be thankful that because the claims of a holy God as to sin and sins have been fully met and his mercy has been lavished upon us that we can be found indulging in the privileges of the house of God.

There is a longing indicated in verse 2 My heart, my flesh, crieth out for the living God.

It is right and common that in the gospel we press upon the sinner that there is a longing in the soul that only God can fill and satisfy.

Do we often enough remind ourselves, the saints of God, that there is a longing in every soul saint and sinner that only God can fully satisfy.

[00:29:04] Here we have it. My soul longeth, yea, even fainteth, for the courts of the Lord my heart and my flesh crieth out for the living God.

We are used to agreeing together in 1 Peter 2 that the yearning for the sincere mental milk of the word of God is not only directed to the spiritual novice, the babe in Christ, it is a sober reflection on the only proper attitude and way of life for every believer.

He says, as newborn babes, and it is the intent and it is our present need [00:30:01] that we should have an ever ongoing longing that our souls should be satisfied and that the agency that he uses is his written living word in the power of the spirit. And here we have an indication here. My heart, my flesh, crieth out for the living God. As a newborn babe continues to cry out till he or she is provided for that for which he or she yearns, so it is with the one who is conscious of the blessing and the privileges of the house of God that the cry goes out and continues to go out until the longing, the craving is satisfied. Yea, the sparrow hath found in house the swallow her nest for herself.

[00:31:04] What do we learn from the Lord's own lips?

Two sparrows sold for a farthing and five for two farthings.

The relatively worthless sparrow available at giveaway prices sold by the pair or the five and yet even the one thrown in, the single solitary one, God is ever sensitive and yearning on his part that the mercy of God should be experienced and enjoyed by individuals who are of no account to the master builders of this world. [00:32:02] The worthless sparrow, the restless swallow, ever flitting about, ever moving, ever on the wing here we have it, a home, a resting place is found for that which is contrary to its nature.

Well, the swallow a nest for herself where she may lay her young, even thine altars. How severe the Lord Jesus ever was in those who abused the house of God of the day for commercial purposes.

But however ready he was to greet, to meet, to endear himself to individuals who were in need and conscious of that need that they should feel at rest [00:33:01] in his presence. Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. The restless swallow, find rest in the presence of God.

You will see that there is a promise, there is a blessing available in each of these three sections. Blessed are they that dwell in thy house. There is blessing in being involved in the privileges of the

house of God. The first four verses. And we'll see in the other sections too. Blessed are they that dwell in thy house, they will be still praising thee.

They will be ever praising thee.

They will be constantly praising thee. A major occupation in the presence of God [00:34:02] is to be occupied with his praises. Judging from the world's and the earthly point of view I have often heard people say Heaven is not attractive to me I would be bored with something going on and on and on whatever it would be. Of course, conditioned by our environment we can understand that there are those who are bored with the things of this earth, this world, this life.

But the scriptures have as a thread right through the fact that God's intent and the joy of the saint is that God should be at home in their presence and there with him in order that they might be ever employed [00:35:02] in the praises of their God. Blessed are they that dwell in thy house, they will be continually praising thee. Selah.

We are justified in splitting the psalm as we do because at the end of verse 4 and the end of verse 8 we get this little expression Selah. Pause for meditation.

Think about that.

What do you think about that wonderful thing? This is something of the thread that comes through in this term Selah. Where does this pause after the consideration of the privileges of the house of God?

The house of God in its fullest sense, I suppose, is that which lies at the end of the responsible pathway.

[00:36:04] I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever using the language of the psalm. But we aren't there yet. We are on our way home.

We are pilgrims on the way home.

And so verses 5 to 8 consider the fact that while we are in the world there will be things that we experience in the world and from the world that won't be pleasant.

But the secret all the way through and these are difficult phrases blessed is the man whose strength is in thee that's straightforward in whose heart are the ways of them. Now the language here seems to be reflexive. You can take it forwards, backwards whichever way you like and there's merit and blessing in it. It certainly comes through to me [00:37:04] as both an underlying and an overriding principle in the verse.

The thing that makes all the difference to the experiences of life is whether or not when we go through them it is with the desire and with the fulfillment of that desire that we are going through in the conscious sense that God is with us in them because we've brought him into the exercise consciously by faith. Now it's then that we get the full gain of the experiences through which we've been brought. It is fair comment, isn't it? That we may have many experiences in life without gaining experience. Gaining experience and the wisdom that comes from experience [00:38:03] is very much different from merely having an abrogate of circumstances that we've learned nothing from. But here

the psalmist and we can put ourselves in the situation that there are things to be learned about ourselves and about our God, the living God the one who has delivered us from so great a judgment by his wonderful mercy and this it is which is commented on in verse 5 who passing through the valley of weeping the valley of tears not so much a geographical location a valley of tears make it aware the rain also filleth the pools.

Some of the experiences of life make us really plumb the depths [00:39:04] the depths of disappointment the depths of sorrow the depths of humiliation but there's strength there's sorrow there's joy to be drawn from such situations if we go through them in communion with our God and so the psalmist says here. He also says while we are going through the deep waters there are the refreshing rains even on the surface as we go through them that give us the assurance that there is that being provided daily which will be for our encouragement and rich reward and so we have the wells we have the pools [00:40:01] whether it is the deep waters of deep trouble and the many angry tears at times it would seem as far as human experience is concerned we learn that in the relative shallowness of many day by day experiences if we've learned the great lesson from the deep sorrows and the much tears we begin then to learn the other lessons from apparently lesser experiences there is a hymn of christian experience not sung much but perhaps most of us have heard it at one time or another which considers all the deep troubles of life things we learn from that the rich joys at times that test us in a different way [00:41:01] but there is a verse that says something like this and all the other days that make my life marked by no special joy or grief or strife the humdrum days the days that seem repetitive where nothing much seems to be going on perhaps there above all days we might be tempted to lose the sense that we need the company of the lord in such mundane circumstances yes we can see the need for his company in the great crises of life but let us learn from this in what may appear to us as shallow pools what may seem to be us to be light showers for the moment that there is that which we learn in the tears that need to be shed in such situations [00:42:01] that joy can be learned in them well when we get to the last few verses 9 to 12 the experiences of life haven't made the psalmist change his mind i like the unfinished sentence a day in thy courts is better than a thousand he doesn't say where in this particular sentence does he he says a day in thy courts is better than a thousand anywhere else that you could imagine that's the voice of experience isn't it or that we might have the experience of communion with the lord that means that after years of experience of life and the things that come along to test and to try us [00:43:04] at the end of the day we are just as convinced that there's no other way we would have lived our life there's none other than christ that we would put our faith in there's no other than the faith system of christianity into which we would cast our lot one of the greatest encouragement to me is that believers have no intention of changing their mind about trusting in the living god and his saviour jesus christ after 50, 60, 70, 80 years of the experiences of life than when they first trusted christ as saviour evidently the psalmist felt exactly like that behold oh god our shield yes there's protection under the hand of god [00:44:01] i'd rather be a doorkeeper in the house of my god than to dwell in the tents of wickedness when i first trusted the lord i was greatly impressed by mature experienced christians who were fully deeply involved in the service of the lord able to do great things and having been brought into the people of god as a result of trusting the lord as saviour i'm sure this was my attitude at that time i'd be very happy sitting in the corner in the back seat not saying anything not doing anything just enjoying being there well of course we all need to do that [00:45:05] the lord has things in mind for us that we can but hardly imagine when we first trust christ as our saviour but here the psalmist doesn't lose the sense of this i'd rather be a doorkeeper and of course that was a place of great privilege and honour it wasn't cringing in the corner in his case he'd rather be in the house of his god with the honour of that privilege than to dwell to be of some honour and place and force and respect in the tents of wickedness the lord god is his son and shield his son the source of all primary

energy directly or indirectly [00:46:04] or that we might have the sense in our souls that as paul could say my god shall supply all your need according to his riches in glory by christ jesus no desire for any other source of supply no looking anywhere else for resources because he is the alone source of supply of all that is valuable his son and shield well whatever the energy god in his grace provides us with there will always be time when we need the sense of his protection over us we are never of ourselves sufficient as the apostles said we are not of ourselves sufficient our sufficiency is of god [00:47:02] the lord will give grace and glory grace for the present glory for the future scripture says in more than one place he giveth grace to the lowly he giveth grace to the humble he will he will give grace and glory he shall crown his work by ushering us and all believers into the joy of his glorious presence and again he finishes as we must with the sense of blessing of those who trust in him privileges of the house of god bring their blessing verse 4 making progress in the things of god bring their blessing verse 5 blessed is the man whose strength is in thee an ever present sense of the protective hand of god as an umbrella over us brings blessing to the soul oh lord of hosts [00:48:02] blessed is the man that trusteth in thee