

Psalm 84: Biblical Reading and Reflections

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[0 : 00] Psalm 84 To the choirmaster, according to the Gittith, a psalm of the sons of Korah. How lovely is your dwelling place, O Lord of hosts!

My soul longs, yes, faints, for the courts of the Lord. My heart and flesh sing for joy to the living God. Even the sparrow finds a home, and the swallow a nest for herself, where she may lay her young.

At your altars, O Lord of hosts, my King and my God, Blessed are those who dwell in your house, ever singing your praise. Blessed are those whose strength is in you, in whose heart are the highways to Zion.

As they go through the valley of Baker, they make it a place of springs. The early rain also covers it with pools. They go from strength to strength, each one appears before God in Zion.

O Lord God of hosts, hear my prayer. Give ear, O God of Jacob. Behold our shield, O God. Look on the face of your anointed. For a day in your courts is better than a thousand elsewhere.

[1 : 05] I would rather be a doorkeeper in the house of my God than dwell in the tents of wickedness. For the Lord God is a sun and shield. The Lord bestows favour and honour.

No good thing does he withhold from those who walk uprightly. O Lord of hosts, blessed is the one who trusts in you. Although it contains elements of a number of genres, Psalm 84 is principally a psalm of pilgrimage, beginning with the pilgrim longing for the house of the Lord as they make their way up to Jerusalem.

William Brown writes, While drawing its imagery from nature and theophany, this pilgrimage song integrates both movement and residence. Those who set their face towards Zion to dwell in its courts are identified with those who walk uprightly.

Indeed, the pilgrimage to Zion is a journey of the heart, within which is set the sanctuary root. As they go from strength to strength, sustained along the way by the fructified land, they reach their final destination.

The journey to Zion is rooted in both the will and emotive depths of one's being. The metaphor of the pathway effectively directs desire, conjoins body and soul, and prepares the heart to enter God's domain.

[2 : 19] The temple, the place of God's dwelling, is the site of refuge for the pilgrimage, to which he makes his way. Faith here is a movement toward the place of God's presence. Given the references to rain in verse 6, it might be the Feast of Tabernacles that is in view here, as Daniel Estes suggests.

Psalm 84 is also, as James Mays observes, a psalm with three beatitudes in it. Blessed are those who dwell in your house, ever singing your praise. Blessed are those whose strength is in you, in whose heart are the highways to Zion.

And then, O Lord of hosts, blessed is the one who trusts in you. Mays writes, Pilgrimage to God's place is a ritual of entry into God's ordering of reality and the conditions of human life.

Although its dominant theme is one of pilgrimage, it also contains intercession for the king and an expression of the delight of being in the presence of God. The psalm opens on a note of love and longing, as if it were a romantic poem.

Yet it is not for some human beloved that the psalmist yearns, but for the courts of the Lord, the place where the Lord's presence is especially to be enjoyed and his face to be sought. Conrad Schaeffer writes, The temple is God's dwelling and a human refuge, surveyed with a shifting scope.

[3 : 51] Dwelling place, courts of the Lord, birds nesting, your altars, those who live in God's house, soul, heart and flesh, representing the spiritual, intellectual and physical aspects, in a word the whole person, desires life from the living God, which the physical condition of finding a home

