

September 20, 2026

Psalm 84

How lovely is your dwelling place, O Lord of hosts! ² My soul longs, yes, faints for the courts of the Lord; my heart and flesh sing for joy to the living God. ³ 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. ⁴ Blessed are those who dwell in your house, ever singing your praise! *Selah*

⁵ Blessed are those whose strength is in you, in whose heart are the highways to Zion. ⁶ As they go through the Valley of Baca they make it a place of springs; the early rain also covers it with pools. ⁷ They go from strength to strength; each one appears before God in Zion. ⁸ O Lord God of hosts, hear my prayer; give ear, O God of Jacob! *Selah*

⁹ Behold our shield, O God; look on the face of your anointed! ¹⁰ For 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. 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. ¹² O Lord of hosts, blessed is the one who trusts in you!



Better is One Day

Psalm 84

BIG IDEA: Because God's presence is our greatest joy, let the Church gather for worship, draw strength for life's journey, and trust Him as our gracious King.

OUTLINE

A House of Praise and Rest (verses 1-4)

A House of Strength and Prayer (verses 5-8)

A House of Protection and Trust (verses 9-12)

DISCIPLESHIP DURING THE WEEK

These “Sermon Discussion Questions” are designed for study during the week for believers in a wide variety of ages & stages in their walk with Christ.

1. A "happy place" is a retreat, a safe haven, a place of rest and restoration where we can return to again and again to be restored or reset in order to reengage well in the day-to-day challenges of life. It can be a particular place, or a recreation or hobby. Do you have a happy place? Describe it.
2. Why was the temple so significant for God's people in the Old Testament?
3. How can our future reward strengthen us during times of sorrow, depression, and opposition today?
4. It is important for us to dwell on the promises of Scripture, rather than looking inward or basing our hope on our feelings and emotions. List the benefits of dwelling in God's house found in the Psalm. Which benefit resonates the most with you?
5. The psalmist longed to dwell in a physical temple in Jerusalem, the one place on earth where God's presence uniquely dwelt among His people. In Christ, that longing finds its fulfillment — Jesus is the true and greater temple, the One in whom the fullness of God's presence dwells (John 1:14; John 2:19–21; Colossians 2:9), and through Him the Church itself is being built into a dwelling place for God by the Spirit (Ephesians 2:19–22). How does seeing Jesus as the temple the psalmist longed for change the way you think about worship, prayer, and drawing near to God today?

HISTORICAL CONTEXT

This is a psalm celebrating pilgrimage to Jerusalem to worship at the temple. It is very much like the hymns in praise of Zion as God's special place (e.g., Psalm 122), although this one especially focuses on the delight of going to worship there. The purpose of singing this psalm is to cultivate that delight, to open the eyes and hearts of God's people to the staggering privilege of being a welcome guest in God's own house, and to write deep into their souls the conviction that wickedness offers no reward that can even remotely compare to the joy and pleasure of God's house.

— ESV Study Bible

“In his comment on Psalm 84:2, Augustine of Hippo describes the movements of the heart of faith in a way that feels surprisingly familiar to contemporary people: 'Here we desire, there we receive; here we sigh with longing, there we rejoice; here we pray, there praise; here we groan, there exult.' What the heart longs for, he remarks, is a home: 'even the sparrow finds a home, and the swallow a nest for herself' (Ps. 84:3). And what sort of home would the heart make for itself? Augustine answers: a home that by God's grace might rise by loving.”

— W. David Taylor

Praise to Jesus – Lord, You are the covenant-keeping God, the commander of heaven's armies, the living God — my King and my God, the only God, the faithful God. You are the source of light and life to Your people, a shield of protection and provision for those who are Yours. You shower us with grace, surround us with Your glory, and show us all Your goodness. We praise You, O Lord of hosts!

Repent through Jesus –Take time today to confess the ways you have settled for lesser dwellings. Confess the days you have treated a seat in God's house as ordinary rather than the staggering privilege it is — trading the joy of His presence for wickedness that promises much and delivers nothing. Confess the valleys of Baca you have tried to walk through in your own strength instead of bringing to Him in prayer. Confess the times you have looked inward, to your own shifting feelings, rather than to the unchanging promises of Scripture and the character of God. Confess whatever has kept your heart from longing for communion with Him — busyness, comfort, distraction, or self-reliance — and ask Him to renew in you the longing of the psalmist's soul.

Consecration for Jesus –Church, because God's presence is our greatest joy, let us gather for worship, draw strength for life's journey, and trust Him as our gracious King — this day and every day, through Jesus Christ our great High Priest, and by the power of His Spirit.

FOR FAMILIES AND YOUNG CHILDREN

These questions are written to aid parents in leading family devotions with their children.

1. What does it mean to be homesick? Have you ever felt homesick? (Talk with your children about how the author of this psalm was homesick for the temple. He wished he were there.)
2. Why does the psalmist want to be in the temple? (In verses 1- 2, we read that he wants to be in God's house because God is there. The temple represented God's presence.)
3. What is described in verses 5-8? (It describes the journey or pilgrimage to the temple in Jerusalem.)
4. What is Zion in verse 5? (That is another name for Jerusalem.)
5. How many times did the author mention being "blessed" in this psalm? What do these mentions of being blessed teach us? (He mentioned being blessed three times. We learn that a blessed life includes being with Him. We also learn that a blessed life includes looking for strength from Him and trusting in Him.)
6. How can we be in God's presence now after the first coming of Jesus and the sending of the Holy Spirit? (Now all believers are filled with the Spirit, so we commune with Him everywhere. The Bible [Matthew 18:20] also reminds us that God comes to us in a special way when we gather as His people.)

Scriptures for further study:

Ephesians 2:20-21

1 Corinthians 3:16-18

FOR STUDENTS

Scriptures for further study:

John 14:1-6

Hebrews 10:19-22

Psalms 27:4

Matthew 5:6

Revelation 21:1-4

Romans 8:18

1. The psalmist says his soul longs and faints for the courts of the Lord - not the building, but the presence of God himself. Augustine wrote that our hearts are restless until they rest in God. Be honest: what are you longing for most right now? How does your answer compare to what the psalmist describes?

2. The psalmist opens with 'How lovely is your dwelling place' - but what follows makes clear that this is not just an aesthetic observation. He is expressing a deep, personal love for the place where God is present. The place matters because of who is there. What does it say about your relationship with God if Sunday worship feels like an obligation rather than a longing? What would need to change for it to feel more like what the psalmist describes?

3. Psalm 84 was a pilgrimage song, sung by travelers making a difficult journey to Jerusalem. The Valley of Baca in verse 6 is either a specific place near Jerusalem or a symbolic expression for deep sorrow — scholars are divided. Either way, the point is the same: the pilgrims pass through hardship, and it becomes a source of springs. What is the valley of weeping in your life right now — the hard, dry place you are moving through? What would it look like to trust that God can transform even that into a source of refreshment?

4. Right in the middle of the journey, the psalmist stops and prays. He does not wait until he arrives - he brings his need to God in the middle of the road. Honestly, what does your prayer life look like in the hard stretches of life - do you press into God or pull away?

5. Better is one day in the Lord's courts than a thousand elsewhere. That is a massive claim. If someone looked at how you spend your time, your attention, and your energy, would they conclude you believe it? What are the thousand other places you are tempted to look for the joy and rest only God's presence can give?

6. The psalm closes with a declaration that God is a sun and shield, that he withholds no good thing from those who walk uprightly, and that the one who trusts in him is blessed. Jesus is the one who makes all of that fully and finally true - he is the door into God's presence, the one who took the valley of weeping on himself so that we could walk into the courts of God. How does the cross change the way you read this psalm? And is his presence what you are living for?

FOR NON-BELIEVERS OR NEW BELIEVERS

1. There is a deep yearning and longing in every human heart. According to one church father (St. Augustine): "Our heart is restless until it rests in God."

Question: Would you agree with this statement? Have you experienced what he is talking about yet?

2. The Psalmist is not so much saying "how lovely is your dwelling place," but "how I love your dwelling place." And the reason he loves this dwelling place is not so much because of the beauty of the place but the beauty of God who dwells there. (This is also the way we should think about heaven.)

Question: What are some of the many ways God's loveliness (character, deeds, blessings, etc.) is highlighted in this Psalm?

3. Psalm 84 was a pilgrimage song. It was sung as ancient travelers made their way through difficult terrain on their way to Jerusalem to one of the feasts. It can also be taken as a metaphor for a believer's journey through this life on their way to heaven.

Question: The journey can sometimes be difficult, taking us through the Valley of Baca (i.e., valley of weeping) --see verse 6. But, according to this Psalm, in what ways does God enable us to transform our valleys into "springs"? Our sorrows into joys?

4. The Psalmist emphatically states, "Better is one day in your courts than a thousand elsewhere" (v.10).

Question: Is your longing for God's presence so intense that you would give up a thousand days elsewhere for just one day at home? Would you rather have the humblest station in God's presence than the most exalted station apart from that presence? (Futato)

The Blessed Life: A Study of the Psalms



"The Light of the World" (1851-1853) by William Holman Hunt

Psalms Introduction

The Book of Psalms is the sacred place where the living God meets His people in the most intimate and personal of ways. He invites them to know Him not merely as an idea, but as their refuge, portion, shepherd, and King. From the opening doorway of blessedness in Psalm 1 to the climactic Hallelujahs of Psalm 150, the Psalter reveals that the truly happy life is one rooted in the person and work of Almighty God, whose steadfast love holds His people through every season of the soul. As the Psalter moves from anguish to adoration, from darkness to dawn, it becomes a mirror of the Christian life itself. It teaches us to pray honestly, to hope stubbornly, and to sing faithfully, even when night seems long. In the deepest valleys, the Psalms give voice to the church's groan; on the highest heights, they train the church's doxology. And in every line, every cry, and every hallelujah, Christ Himself comes near, revealing the light of the world in the dark night of the soul and leading His people into the blessedness that only His grace can give.

– Pastor Bill

About the artwork and artist.

The Light of the World, 1851-1853, is an iconic allegorical painting by William Holman Hunt. The painting depicts Jesus Christ as a regal figure in flowing robes, wearing a crown of thorns, holding a glowing lantern, and preparing to knock on a weed-overgrown wooden door with no external handle. This illustrates Revelation 3:20 from the Bible: "Behold, I stand at the door and knock; if any man hears My voice and opens the door, I will come in to him..." The artist William Holman Hunt is showing us that Jesus is the divine door to the living God who meets His people in the most intimate and personal ways. The closed, overgrown door → representing the human soul or "obstinately shut mind" that has long ignored spiritual calling. There is no handle on the outside → the door can only be opened from within, emphasizing free will and personal invitation to faith. The lantern → Christ as the light of the world (John 8:12), illuminating darkness and offering salvation. The work marked Hunt's deepening Christian faith (from earlier agnosticism) and became one of the most reproduced and devotional images of the Victorian era, inspiring oratorios, hymns, and widespread popular piety. It's often called a visual sermon on personal salvation.