

Psalms: The Songs of the People of God
Psalm 84: Longing for the Presence of God and
The Blessedness of Drawing Near
Sunday, July 14, 2019

Introduction

The Westminster Catechism begins with the question: *What is the chief end of man?* The answer provides a succinct way of thinking about our primary purpose in life: *Man's chief end is to glorify God and to enjoy him forever.*

As we consider this 'purpose statement' we tend to pay a lot of attention to the first part, and rightly so! We should give our lives to pursuing the glory of God. But there's a reason for the second part: The Bible has a lot to say about our enjoyment of God and the joy we have in Him (Psalm 16:11; Philippians 4:4). But that leads to an important question: Is God our true and ultimate source of joy? Or we could ask the question this way: Do we long to draw near to God? Do we yearn for Him and desire Him?

As we come to Psalm 84 we read the testimony of a man who longing for God. He longs to be near to the presence of God. He also expresses that there is joy, or blessedness, to be had by those who long for God.

More than A Physical Location – A Longing for God Himself

As we consider the psalm there is a lot of attention to the Temple of God. The psalmist is longing for a place. He loves the Temple of God and longs to be there more than anywhere else. But we must recognize that while there's a lot of talk about a place, the psalmist's true longing is for God. He longs to be in the Temple of God because that's where the presence of God dwells; He longs to be near to God.

The Psalmist's Longing for the Dwelling Place of God (84:1-4)

- **The God of the Psalmist's Longing** - As the psalmist expresses his deep and fervent longing for the house of God, he also uses names and titles for God that place the real emphasis on Him. Four times in the psalm God is referred to as the Lord of Hosts (vs. 1, 3, 8, 12). He also calls Him the living God, His King and emphasizes the love and care of God for His own.
- **A Deep Seated Desire and Longing (vv. 1-2)** – The psalmist's deep seated desire and longing for God is clear: his soul longs, faints and cries out. We see similar expressions in other psalms (42:1-2; 27:4; 122:1-2). These psalms also use the 'place of God' as a way of expressing a longing for the presence of God.

- **Application:** The reality is that there's no longer a place where we can be physically close to the presence of God, but we have something far better. As the people of God we have His Spirit within us and we can, at anytime, draw near to Him (1 Corinthians 3:16-17; Hebrews 4:16).
- **The Benefit of the Birds (vs. 3)** – As the psalmist thinks of the birds that live in the walls of the Temple he considers their enviable situation: They live all their lives in such close proximity to the presence of God!
- **The Blessing of Drawing Near** – Three times the psalmist includes a statement of "blessedness." A primary theme of the psalm is that those who draw near to God will find joy in Him (Psalm 73:25-28).

A Pilgrimage to the Temple and the Blessing of those who Long for God's Presence (84:5-7)

- While it was a great joy to be at the Temple in Jerusalem for many people it was a rare privilege. The psalmist uses the pilgrimage of those who traveled to Zion as a picture of hearts longing to be near to God.
- **The Blessings of the Travelers** – The psalmist uses rain in a dry land as a picture of the blessing that follows those who long to draw near to God. As they travel God blesses them and increases their strength.

A Prayer of Intercession for the King (84:8-9)

- In vs. 8-9 the psalmist offers a prayer for the King of Israel. While this prayer seems to break the flow of the psalm it serves as a reminder of who the psalmist really desires and who He trusts.

The Joy and Benefits of Living in the Presence of God (84:10-12)

- In this final section the psalmist makes the reasons for His longings clear. It's obvious that his longing for God is not out of a sense of duty, but out of delight. He truly believes that there is great joy and benefit to be experienced in drawing near to God.
- **Drawing Near for Joy (vs. 10)** – Verse 10 uses great imagery to make a simple point: there is no place the psalmist would rather be. He considers the presence of God to be far superior to any alternative (Philippians 3:7-9; 1:21-23; Hebrews 11:24-26).
- **Drawing Near because of who God is (vs. 11a)** – The descriptions of God in this verse remind us of God's love and power. He is light in the dark (sun) and a source of peace and protection (shield).
- **Drawing Near because of how God cares for those who are His (vv. 11b-12)** – The Bible is clear that those who draw near to God will be blessed, both in this life and in eternity. In Christ we have received all good things (Psalm 34:8-10; Romans 8:31-32).