

## No Place Like God's Place

I agree with Spurgeon who said that Psalm 84 “exhales Davidic perfume.” The time is David’s exile in the wilderness. Absalom has stolen the hearts of the men of Israel; David has vacated the throne, his house and (even more sadly for him) the nearness to the Tabernacle, the place of God’s abode on the earth. II Samuel 15:30 shows us the heartbreak of it all: “And David went up by the ascent of mount Olivet, and wept as he went up, and had his head covered, and he went barefoot: and all the people that was with him covered every man his head, and they went up, weeping as they went up.” You can see David written all over this Psalm; you can savor the smells of the mountain heather as the young shepherd boy was out in the wilderness in his youth, but now as the great king and warrior he returns to his former abode--defeated. And while there, nostalgia begins to take over. “Nostalgia” comes from the Greek nostos: to return home and algia: a painful condition. Literally, it is “a painful yearning to return home.” And home for David is much more than the place he abides; it is the house of God. It was David who said in Psalm 122:1, “I was glad when they said unto me, Let us go into the house of the LORD.” For David, he could honestly say from his heart what we often say of Christchurch: “There’s no place like this place, anywhere near this place, so this must be the place.” Let’s talk about this place of which David was so very fond.

### I. THE BELOVED PLACE OF WORSHIP

Psalm 84:1, 2: “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.”

The word “amiable” comes to us from a Hebrew word meaning “well-beloved.” Too many people come to the house of God simply out of habit. If that is the motivating reason, I will accept that until delight becomes the motivating reason. When David was referring to the tabernacles he was talking about the tents making up the Outer Court, the Holy Place and the Most Holy Place. This was not the exotic and outwardly beautiful Temple that Solomon built. As you approached the ancient Tabernacle, you saw the rough skins of covering and what appeared to be a very modest structure. Ah! But the beauty was on the inside. We cannot fail to make the application referring to our Lord in His passion as found in Isaiah 53:2, “... He hath no form nor comeliness; and when we shall see him, there is no beauty that we should desire him.” It was when the Jewish worshipper stepped into the Tabernacle that he began to see the beauty of the Lord. Psalm 27:4: “One thing have I desired of the LORD, that will I seek after; that I may dwell in the house of the LORD all the days of my life, to behold the beauty of the LORD, and to enquire in his temple.”

David longs and faints to be back in the manifested presence of the living God within the courts of God's house. The great Puritan Thomas Brooks said, "If you've ever seen a wee child crying for its milk, this is the way David was." One commentator put it like this: "The word, literally in the Hebrew, for 'longing' is 'growing pale'. He was growing pale! He goes further: 'even fainteth', literally the word is 'to be consumed with lovesickness'. The Latins used to say that they were dying of love; this is the sentiment that David is communicating here." He is saying I am wasting away if I cannot be with God's people and even much more so, in fellowship with God in this blessed and beloved place.

## II. THE BLESSED PLACE FOR FAMILY

Psalm 84:3, 4: "Yea, the sparrow hath found an house, and the swallow a nest for herself, 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."

Here we observe David almost with envy, reminiscing seeing the birds who made their nest in the eaves of God's house. On another occasion David said in Psalm 55:6, "And I said, Oh that I had wings like a dove! for then would I fly away, and be at rest." It's as though David is saying, I would like to fly back to Zion, back to the house of God. But I see a tender longing for another chance with his children. He moves into metaphor longing to have his family, like a nest and his kids back at the altars of God. He speaks not in the singular, but in the plural – "altars." What are the altars? He refers to the Brazen Altar (Exodus 39:30; II Chronicles 1:6) and the Golden Altar (Exodus 40:26,27; II Chronicles 4:19). The Brazen Altar is the altar of sacrifice and the Golden Altar is the altar of incense. The brass represents judgment and gold represents Deity. It is at the altar of brass in the outer court where our Lord dies in type. It is at the altar of gold, where we, by type, have communion in prayer with our Lord symbolized by the incense rising toward heaven. David seems to be longing to bring his kids who went prodigal to the Brazen Altar and to trust the Lamb of God to take away their sins. Then he doesn't stop there; he longs for his kids to have sweet communion with the Lord in prayer. The Golden Altar was in the Holy Place. You cannot live in the holy place and live unholy lives. Is this not the desire of Christian parents to bring their child to the Brazen Altar (John 19:16-18)? And then to teach that child to come boldly to the Golden Altar (Hebrews 4:16)?

## III. THE BURDEN-LIFTING PLACE

Psalm 84:5-8: "Blessed is the man whose strength is in thee; in whose heart are the ways of them. Who passing through the valley of Baca 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."

David is longing to make the pilgrimage home to the house of God. But he knows far too well this means he must go while weeping. “Baca” means “weeping.” God will allow our tears to form a well. But even in the tears and trials we can say with Isaiah, “...I will trust, and not be afraid: for the LORD JEHOVAH is my strength and my song; he also is become my salvation. Therefore with joy shall ye draw water out of the wells of salvation” (Isaiah 12:2b, 3). The heart breaks, but God supplies strength. It breaks again and He supplies strength again.

#### IV. THE BEST PLACE FOR ALL TO BE

Psalm 84:9-12: “ Behold, O God our shield, and look upon the face of thine anointed. 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.”

There can be no better place to be than in the presence of God. One day with Him is better than one thousand without Him. David even goes so far as to say, I would rather be with the sons of Korah and keep the door. Easton’s Bible Dictionary says this word signifies properly “sitting at the threshold in the house of God.” The Psalmist means that he would rather stand at the door of God’s house and merely look in, than dwell in houses where iniquity prevailed.”

F. B. Meyer wrote, “A Sun and Shield.--A Sun in dark hours and a Shade in scorching ones. Grace is the bud of glory. Glory is the flower of grace. If God has given the first, He will give the second. If He withholds aught on which you have set your heart, believe it is not really good and still trust Him. We stand in grace and look for glory.”

Nothing that is best for us will be deprived if we look to Him! Psalm 34:5: “They looked unto him, and were lightened: and their faces were not ashamed.” God’s will, God’s house, God’s place is the best place to be!

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Johnny Pope". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style with a long horizontal line extending to the right.