

Praise God for His Presence

Psalm 84:1-12

SS Lesson for 10/24/2021

Devotional Scripture: Ps 15:1-5

OUTLINE

LESSON BACKGROUND AND KEY VERSE

Background from the NIV Standard Lesson Commentary

Key Verse: Psalm 84:4

Commentary from the Bible Knowledge Commentary

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A Congregation that bears fruit (Col 1:5-6)

A Congregation whose people are God's building (1 Cor 3:9)

A Congregation that is courageous and full of hope (Heb 3:6)

A Congregation whose people are equipped for ministry (Eph 4:11-16)

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A home where the whole household can be saved (Acts 16:29-33)

A home where evangelism can be spread (Acts 21:8-9)

A home where others can come to worship and pray (1 Cor 16:19)

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Prayers that seek God's grace (11)

Grace that comes by justification through faith (Rom 5:1-3)

Grace that is a gift from God through Jesus (Rom 5:15)

Grace that increases as sin increases (Rom 5:20)
Grace through whom a remnant has been chosen (Rom 11:5-6)
Grace that is sufficient in weakness (2 Cor 12:9)

Prayers communicated in trust (12)

Trust God to lead us in the way of righteousness (Ps 139:23-24)
Trust God and don't worry (Matt 6:25-27)
Trust God by seeking His kingdom first (Luke 12:29-31)
Trust God because He cares for us (1 Peter 5:7)
Trust God by being patient and standing firm in the faith (James 5:7-8)
Trust God by being convinced of His ability (2 Tim 1:12)

CONCLUSION AND OTHER THOUGHTS

COMMENTARY THOUGHTS FROM DR. THOMAS CONSTABLE
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Lesson Background and Key Verse

Background from the NIV Standard Lesson Commentary

Psalms 84 is one of the 17 psalms that constitute Book III of the Psalter. Expressions of praise characterize many of these psalms. A total of 11 psalms are written “of the Sons of Korah,” 4 of which are in Book III—namely, Psalms 84; 85; 87, and 88—according to their superscriptions. This could mean either that the songs were written by those descendants of Korah or that they were written for them to sing. In either case, the sons must have been musically gifted (2 Chronicles 20:19). Regarding Korah himself, he was a descendant of Kohath, a son of Levi (Exodus 6:16–21). Korah, accompanied by members of the tribe of Reuben, had led a rebellion against the God-given authority of Moses and Aaron during the exodus. As a result, Korah was put to death along with 250 others (Numbers 16:1–2, 35). Despite this blemish on the family line, Korah’s descendants (Numbers 26:58) became prominent in the temple worship that King David arranged before his death, toward the day his son Solomon would complete the building of the temple. The record of the service of Korah’s descendants as gatekeepers is found in 1 Chronicles 9:19; 26:1. If Psalm 84 was written for rather than by the sons of Korah, one guess about its author is King David. This is based on the occurrence of the word translated “shield” in Psalm 84:9, 11 since this word occurs also in Psalms 3; 5; 144, and others—the superscriptions of which attribute them to David. This would date the psalm’s composition before David’s death in 970 BC. But other psalms that are not attributed to David also have that word, so the conclusion is not ironclad. The occasion of the composition may have been that of a pilgrimage to the temple, perhaps for a new-year festival. This, though speculative, is as good a guess as any (see on Psalm 84:5). Regarding the superscription’s “For the director of music,” the meaning of the phrase “According to gittith” is uncertain. The word gittith is likely a musical term, perhaps a musical instrument or a reference to a certain type of celebratory melody (see also Psalms 8 and 81).

Key Verse: Psalm 84:4

Blessed are those who dwell in Your house; They will still be praising You

Commentary from the Bible Knowledge Commentary

This passage is a companion to Psalms 42 and 43, because it expresses the same yearning for the formal place of worship. Technically it is a pilgrimage song, though it is not in the collection of pilgrim psalms (Pss. 120-134). In Psalm 84 the pilgrim declared the blessedness of a believer who in faith journeys to the temple to pray to the Lord. The author is unknown; it was to be sung by the Korahites.

84:1-2. The psalm breaks out with praise for the **dwelling place** (cf. 74:7; 76:2; 132:5, 7) of the **LORD Almighty** (cf. 84:3, 8, 12; lit., “Yahweh of hosts,” i.e., armies). For this place (the temple with its **courts**; cf. v. 10) the psalmist’s **heart and... flesh** (body) longed. To yearn for the temple meant to long **for the living God** Himself (cf. 42:2). In that day people could approach God through the temple priests. The psalmist’s faith was thus in the living, powerful Lord God.

84:3-4. The psalmist conveyed his intense yearning for **God** and His temple by noting the enviable position of those in the temple—nesting birds and ministering servants (priests **who dwell in** the temple rooms).

84:5-7. The psalmist declared the blessedness (cf. v. 12; i.e., the joyous privileges and great benefits) of **those** who demonstrate their faith by going **on pilgrimage** (cf. Deut. 16:16) to appear in Jerusalem (**Zion**) **before** the Lord. On their pilgrimage they were strengthened by God's blessings. **The Valley of Baca** ("balsam tree") was apparently a waterless place that became **a place of springs**. The **rains** would **cover** the arid valley **with pools** of water, a vivid picture of God's blessings on the faithful pilgrims.

84:8-9. The pilgrim, once he arrived in God's dwelling place in Zion, prayed for the king, who was like a **shield** protecting the people, and was God's **anointed one** (cf. 2:2). As the **LORD God Almighty** (lit., "Yahweh, God of hosts") and the **God of Jacob**, He is able to intervene on behalf of His people and deliver them.

84:10-12. The pilgrim-psalmist stated why he longed to go to Zion: he was confident that God would answer his prayer. Reaffirming his intense love for the temple and its **courts** (cf. v. 2), he said that **one day** there was **better... than a thousand elsewhere**; to be a servant there was better than living in the lavish **tents of the wicked**. The reason, of course, was that God was at the temple and would bless and protect (be **a Sun and Shield**; cf. 3:3) and bestow **favor** and **good** things (cf. 16:2; 34:10) on those who would **walk** blamelessly. Another prerequisite for receiving God's blessings is trust.

Major Theme Analysis

(Scriptural Text from the New King James Version; cross-references from the NIV)

Presence in Our Every Location (Ps 84:1-4)

- 1 How lovely is Your tabernacle, O Lord of hosts!
- 2 My soul longs, yes, even faints for the courts of the Lord; My heart and my flesh cry out for the living God.
- 3 Even the sparrow has found a home, and the swallow a nest for herself, Where she may lay her young — Even Your altars, O Lord of hosts, My King and my God.
- 4 Blessed are those who dwell in Your house; They will still be praising You. Selah

In the Church congregation (1-2)

A Congregation that overcomes (Matt 16:18-20)

18 And I tell you that you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of Hades will not overcome it. 19 I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven; whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven." 20 Then he warned his disciples not to tell anyone that he was the Christ.

A Congregation that bears fruit (Col 1:5-6)

5 the faith and love that spring from the hope that is stored up for you in heaven and that you have already heard about in the word of truth, the gospel 6 that has come to you. All over the world this gospel is bearing fruit and growing, just as it has been doing among you since the day you heard it and understood God's grace in all its truth.

A Congregation whose people are God's building (1 Cor 3:9)

9 For we are God's fellow workers; you are God's field, God's building.

A Congregation that is courageous and full of hope (Heb 3:6)

6 But Christ is faithful as a son over God's house. And we are his house, if we hold on to our courage and the hope of which we boast.

A Congregation whose people are equipped for ministry (Eph 4:11-16)

11 It was he who gave some to be apostles, some to be prophets, some to be evangelists, and some to be pastors and teachers, 12 to prepare God's people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up 13 until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ. 14 Then we will no longer be infants, tossed back and forth by the waves, and blown here and there by every wind of teaching and by the cunning and craftiness of men in their deceitful scheming. 15 Instead, speaking the truth in love, we will in all things grow up into him who is the Head, that is, Christ. 16 From him the whole body, joined and held together by every supporting ligament, grows and builds itself up in love, as each part does its work.

In the home (3-4)

A home where witnessing starts (Luke 8:39)

39 "Return home and tell how much God has done for you." So the man went away and told all over town how much Jesus had done for him.

A home where the whole household can be saved (Acts 16:29-33)

29 The jailer called for lights, rushed in and fell trembling before Paul and Silas. 30 He then brought them out and asked, "Sirs, what must I do to be saved?" 31 They replied, "Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved — you and your household." 32 Then they spoke the word of the Lord to him and to all the others in his house. 33 At that hour of the night the jailer took them and washed their wounds; then immediately he and all his family were baptized.

A home where evangelism can be spread (Acts 21:8-9)

8 Leaving the next day, we reached Caesarea and stayed at the house of Philip the evangelist, one of the Seven. 9 He had four unmarried daughters who prophesied.

A home where others can come to worship and pray (1 Cor 16:19)

19 The churches in the province of Asia send you greetings. Aquila and Priscilla greet you warmly in the Lord, and so does the church that meets at their house.

Presence in Our Lives (Ps 84:5-7)

5 Blessed is the man whose strength is in You, whose heart is set on pilgrimage.
6 As they pass through the Valley of Baca, They make it a spring; The rain also covers it with pools.
7 They go from strength to strength; Each one appears before God in Zion.

In our lives through God's strengthening (5)

Strength that comes from Jesus (Phil 4:13)

13 I can do everything through him who gives me strength.

Strength that God provides (1 Peter 4:11)

11 If anyone speaks, he should do it as one speaking the very words of God. If anyone serves, he should do it with the strength God provides, so that in all things God may be praised through Jesus Christ. To him be the glory and the power for ever and ever. Amen.

Strength that God arms us with (Ps 18:32)

32 It is God who arms me with strength and makes my way perfect.

Strength because God is with us wherever we go (Josh 1:9)

9 Have I not commanded you? Be strong and courageous. Do not be terrified; do not be discouraged, for the Lord your God will be with you wherever you go."

Strength in our weakness (2 Cor 13:4)

4 For to be sure, he was crucified in weakness, yet he lives by God's power. Likewise, we are weak in him, yet by God's power we will live with him to serve you.

Strength in God's mighty power (Eph 6:10)

10 Finally, be strong in the Lord and in his mighty power.

In our lives through trials (6)

Trials that purify (Job 23:10)

10 But he knows the way that I take; when he has tested me, I will come forth as gold.

Trials that influences obedience (Ps 119:67)

67 Before I was afflicted I went astray, but now I obey your word.

Trials that aid in achieving eternal glory (2 Cor 4:17)

17 For our light and momentary troubles are achieving for us an eternal glory that far outweighs them all.

Trials that should be expected in this life (1 Peter 4:12)

12 Dear friends, do not be surprised at the painful trial you are suffering, as though something strange were happening to you.

Trials that develop perseverance (James 1:2-3)

2 Consider it pure joy, my brothers, whenever you face trials of many kinds, 3 because you know that the testing of your faith develops perseverance.

In our lives through God's presence (7)

God's presence in our lives that is eternal (Ps 16:11)

11 You have made known to me the path of life; you will fill me with joy in your presence, with eternal pleasures at your right hand.

God's presence in our lives because it provides blessings (Ps 21:6)

6 Surely you have granted him eternal blessings and made him glad with the joy of your presence.

God's presence in our lives because of His unfailing love (Isa 54:10)

10 Though the mountains be shaken and the hills be removed, yet my unfailing love for you will not be shaken nor my covenant of peace be removed," says the Lord, who has compassion on you.

God's presence in our lives because nothing can separate us (Rom 8:38-39)

38 For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, 39 neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

God's presence in our lives because it is a hiding place of refuge (Ps 31:20)

20 In the shelter of your presence you hide them from the intrigues of men; in your dwelling you keep them safe from accusing tongues.

Presence in Prayer (Ps 84:8-12)

8 O Lord God of hosts, hear my prayer; Give ear, O God of Jacob! Selah

9 O God, behold our shield, and look upon the face of Your anointed.

10 For a day in Your courts is better than a thousand. 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 will give grace and glory; No good thing will He withhold from those who walk uprightly.

12 O Lord of hosts, blessed is the man who trusts in You!

Prayers that seek God's attentiveness (8)

Attentive because God's eyes are on the righteous (Ps 34:15)

15 The eyes of the Lord are on the righteous and his ears are attentive to their cry;

Attentive because God hears the cries for mercy (Ps 130:2)

2 O Lord, hear my voice. Let your ears be attentive to my cry for mercy.

Attentive because of humble and repenting people (2 Chron 7:14-15)

14 if my people, who are called by my name, will humble themselves and pray and seek my face and turn from their wicked ways, then will I hear from heaven and will forgive their sin and will heal their land. 15 Now my eyes will be open and my ears attentive to the prayers offered in this place.

Attentive because God hears the prayer of the righteous (Prov 15:29)

29 The Lord is far from the wicked but he hears the prayer of the righteous.

Attentive because God listens to the godly (John 9:31)

31 We know that God does not listen to sinners. He listens to the godly man who does his will.

Prayers that seek communion with God (9-10)

Communion through walking with God (Lev 26:11-12)

11 I will put my dwelling place among you, and I will not abhor you. 12 I will walk among you and be your God, and you will be my people.

Communion through God making His home with us (John 14:23)

23 Jesus replied, "If anyone loves me, he will obey my teaching. My Father will love him, and we will come to him and make our home with him.

Communion through being the temple of God (2 Cor 6:16)

16 What agreement is there between the temple of God and idols? For we are the temple of the living God. As God has said: "I will live with them and walk among them, and I will be their God, and they will be my people."

Communion with the faithful God (Zech 8:8)

8 I will bring them back to live in Jerusalem; they will be my people, and I will be faithful and righteous to them as their God."

Prayers that seek God's grace (11)

Grace that comes by justification through faith (Rom 5:1-3)

1 Therefore, since we have been justified through faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, 2 through whom we have gained access by faith into this grace in which we now stand. And we rejoice in the hope of the glory of God. 3 Not only so, but we also rejoice in our sufferings, because we know that suffering produces perseverance;

Grace that is a gift from God through Jesus (Rom 5:15)

15 But the gift is not like the trespass. For if the many died by the trespass of the one man, how much more did God's grace and the gift that came by the grace of the one man, Jesus Christ, overflow to the many!

Grace that increases as sin increases (Rom 5:20)

20 The law was added so that the trespass might increase. But where sin increased, grace increased all the more,

Grace through whom a remnant has been chosen (Rom 11:5-6)

5 So too, at the present time there is a remnant chosen by grace. 6 And if by grace, then it is no longer by works; if it were, grace would no longer be grace.

Grace that is sufficient in weakness (2 Cor 12:9)

9 But he said to me, "My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness." Therefore I will boast all the more gladly about my weaknesses, so that Christ's power may rest on me.

Prayers communicated in trust (12)

Trust God to lead us in the way of righteousness (Ps 139:23-24)

23 Search me, O God, and know my heart; test me and know my anxious thoughts. 24 See if there is any offensive way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting.

Trust God and don't worry (Matt 6:25-27)

25 "Therefore I tell you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat or drink; or about your body, what you will wear. Is not life more important than food, and the body more important than clothes? 26 Look at the birds of the air; they do not sow or reap or store away in barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not much more valuable than they? 27 Who of you by worrying can add a single hour to his life?

Trust God by seeking His kingdom first (Luke 12:29-31)

29 And do not set your heart on what you will eat or drink; do not worry about it. 30 For the pagan world runs after all such things, and your Father knows that you need them. 31 But seek his kingdom, and these things will be given to you as well.

Trust God because He cares for us (1 Peter 5:7)

7 Cast all your anxiety on him because he cares for you.

Trust God by being patient and standing firm in the faith (James 5:7-8)

7 Be patient, then, brothers, until the Lord's coming. See how the farmer waits for the land to yield its valuable crop and how patient he is for the autumn and spring rains. 8 You too, be patient and stand firm, because the Lord's coming is near.

Trust God by being convinced of His ability (2 Tim 1:12)

12 That is why I am suffering as I am. Yet I am not ashamed, because I know whom I have believed, and am convinced that he is able to guard what I have entrusted to him for that day.

Conclusion and Other Thoughts

Commentary Thoughts from Dr. Thomas Constable

Verses 1-4

This psalm, like Psalms 42, 43, expresses the writer's desire for the Lord's sanctuary. It is one of the pilgrim or ascent psalms that the Israelites sang as they traveled to the sanctuary to worship God (cf. Psalms 120-134). In it, the unknown writer declared the blessed condition of those who go to the temple to pray to Yahweh. The sons of Korah were those who arranged and or sang this psalm in Israel's public worship.

Verses 3-4

The psalmist considered the birds that made their nests in the temple and its courts as specially privileged since they were always near God and protected by Him. The priests also had a great advantage because they worked in the rooms surrounding the temple. They could praise God always because they were at the center of His worship.

"Three times he uses the word 'Blessed', or 'Happy': once wistfully (4), once resolutely (5), once in deep contentment (12). These can guide us in exploring the movement of the psalm." [Note: Kidner, Psalms 73-150, p. 303.]

Verses 5-7

The person who sets his or her heart on finding strength in the Lord experiences great blessing. Such a person looked forward to travelling to Mt. Zion to worship Him there. The word "baca" means "balsam trees." The Valley of the Balsam Trees was evidently an arid region that the writer used as an example of a spiritually dry state. The pilgrim whose heart anticipated temple worship joyfully found spiritual refreshment in situations others found parched. His spiritual experience was similar to the coming of the early spring rains on that valley's waterless ground. Such a person becomes stronger and stronger spiritually as he or she draws closer and closer to God.

Verses 8-9

The pilgrim addressed God in prayer as he traveled. He interceded for the king, who was as a shield for the people, as well as the Lord's anointed vice regent.

Verses 10-12

He valued standing and serving in the temple because there he could experience intimacy with God. He could occupy himself with Yahweh and His worship intensively. That is all people usually did in the temple. Consequently, wickedness was less prevalent there than anywhere else. God's beneficent influence is sun-like, providing light and warmth on those below. He also protects those close to Him. He gives unmerited favor and divine enablement (grace) as well as honor (glory). He sends only good things to the lives of those who walk harmoniously with His will. Therefore the person who trusts Him experiences His blessing.

"The essence of godliness is in submissiveness to the Great King, who will grant his blessings to those who find their refuge in him . . ." [Note: VanGemeren, p. 546.]

This psalm expresses the joy that comes through intimacy with God. In Israel, this took place in proximity to Yahweh's localized presence in the temple. Today, it takes place as the believer trusts and obeys God as He has revealed His will in Scripture. There are degrees of intimacy. This psalm visualizes getting closer to God by approaching the temple. Some believers choose to live close to God, and others prefer to live further away from Him. Of course, unbelievers have no personal relationship with Him.

(Adapted from URL: <https://www.studyight.org/commentaries/eng/dcc/psalms-84.html>)

Concluding Thoughts from the NIV Standard Lesson Commentary

While the psalmist was quite passionate about being in the Lord's house, readers today may wonder whether such passion is fitting for Christians. To this we can answer yes in terms of the need to gather with other Christians (Matthew 18:20; Hebrews 10:25) while at the same time remembering that church buildings of the New Testament era are not equivalent to the temple of the Old Testament era. More than location, the psalmist's heart was set on spending time with God. It was God's presence that made the place of worship the sacred place that it was. While our houses of worship today bear little to no resemblance in form and function to the temple in Jerusalem, the psalmist's longing to be in God's presence still stands. But how seriously do we take the truth that we are always in God's presence, given that we are the new-covenant temple? See 1 Corinthians 3:16–17; 2 Corinthians 6:16; and Ephesians 2:19–22. Christians long to be with Jesus and in his presence for eternity, and that is a good thing. But as we anticipate that great day, what a tragedy it would be to not draw on the good thing we have now: the indwelling of the Holy Spirit.

Concluding Thoughts from the Echoes Commentary

The Levites - The sons of Korah became great leaders in choral and orchestral music during the reign of King David. These descendants of Kohath, the Levites, wrote 11 hymns recorded in the Book of Psalms (Pss. 42, 44–49, 84–85, and 87–88). Each one of the poetic songs expresses a sweet spirit of humility and thanksgiving as well as a sincere devotion and longing to be in close fellowship with God.

Delight in the Lord - The author of Psalm 84 started his writings by first stating two facts about the temple: it is beautiful, and it is loved by those who love God. His physical body stood far away from the symbolic building, yet his spiritual appetite longed to experience a nourishing fellowship with the true and living God. In the past, the psalmist lovingly observed birds nesting in the temple courts or perched near the altar. The building served as a place of refuge for the mother bird to give birth to her young. Also, the priest and Levites both lived and worked in the sacred building. This writer envied their privilege to engage closely with the Lord, working in His house while free from outside worries or sadness, a place of peace and quietness.

Trust the Lord's Strength - Secondly, the psalmist declared that his strength comes from God alone. During his challenging time, the psalmist depended on the living water from a spiritual well, finding vigor and energy from his primary source—the living God. The sojourner grew stronger with each passing day, despite life's uncertainties and tears. He traveled with a definite destination in mind: a genuine meeting with God.

God Our Confidence - Finally, the writer declared that his confidence is in the Lord. He concluded his prayer by repeating an earlier thought—time spent in God's presence is precious. The Lord extends His hands, offering His children grace, peace, and hope throughout eternity. Psalm 84 speaks to leaders in God's house today. Those in charge need to do more than offer programs, social connections, entertainment, excitement, or self-improvement. Workers in God's house must arrange places and space for worshipers to meet with the Lord, enjoy being in His presence, and learn how to depend on Him utterly.