



From Strength to Strength: Longing for God's Presence

NOTES

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Psalm 84 For the director of music. According to *gittith*. Of the Sons of Korah. A psalm.

¹How lovely is Your dwelling place, LORD Almighty! ²My soul yearns, even faints, for the courts of the LORD; my heart and my flesh cry out for the living God. ³Even the sparrow has found a home, and the swallow a nest for herself, where she may have her young— a place near Your altar, LORD Almighty, my King and my God. ⁴Blessed* are those who dwell in Your house; they are ever praising You. *Selah* ⁵Blessed* are those whose **strength** is in You, whose hearts are set on pilgrimage. ⁶As they pass through the Valley of Baka, they make it a place of springs; the autumn rains also cover it with pools. ⁷They go **from strength to strength**, till each appears before God in Zion. ⁸Hear my prayer, LORD God Almighty; listen to me, God of Jacob. *Selah* ⁹Look on our shield, O God; look with favor on Your anointed one. ¹⁰Better is one day in Your courts than a thousand elsewhere; I would rather be a doorkeeper in the house of my God than dwell in the tents of the wicked. ¹¹For the LORD God is a sun and shield; the LORD bestows favor and honor; no good thing does He withhold from those whose walk is blameless. ¹²LORD Almighty, blessed* is the one who trusts in You.

1. Back Story to Sons of Korah

Family line - Sons through Great Grandsons of Korah - Levites (1 Chron 26; 2 Chron 20:19; Nu 16 (rebellion), 26:9-11) (generational grace his family went on as gate-keepers and musicians)

2. Introduction to Pilgrims' Psalm ("Pearl of Psalms" related to Song book for Ascents = Psalms 120-134):

Passover, Pentecost (feast of weeks, first fruits), & Tabernacles-Tents Ex 23:14-17; Ex 34:18-23; Deut 16:1, 9-10, 13, 16-17). No complaint, no call for deliverance, no expressed burdens, but a psalm yearning for presence of God (for being in God's presence in the temple). Many contemporary choruses, including:

- Better is one day in your courts (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ndVRcqziKWA>)
- How lovely is your dwelling place (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RsxOE9TuLZM>)

Theme of the Temple: Your dwelling place (1), the courts of the LORD (2), home (3), nest (3), a place near Your altar (3), Your house (4), Zion (7), Your courts (10), house of my God (10). God manifested His presence in tabernacle - courts. What made temple precious was NOT the structures but the very presence of God. Gen 1 creation as temple, Gen 2 Garden as temple, Tabernacle as temple, 1st and 2nd temples, Jesus the true temple, Christ's presence and rule through the Church-His body, God dwelling in the ordinary Christian.

Theme of Lord Almighty (Lord of Hosts) - vs 1, 3, 8, 12 God, Himself, is exalted, sovereign and majestic. He is meant to rule over our hearts and its affections.

Theme of Blessed* vs 4, 5, 12 This blessedness is more than temporary and subjective happiness - person who is blessed (a declaration of an objective "being blessed by God").

3. Our Universal and Deep Yearnings for God and Satisfaction from His Presence

The origin of deep longings or desires (1, 2): Feelings of longing for something that we no longer have and wish very much that we did. Psalmist is missing the worship of God - sense of separation and longing. Longings - thirst - hunger are common experiences - we long for significance, for community and we long for God's presence (transcendence) - longing is for God himself. The nearness of God is my good - Psalm 73:25, 26 (beginning of Book 3 of Psalms) - *the nearness of God is my Good* [²⁵Whom have I in heaven but you? And earth has nothing I desire besides you. ²⁶My flesh and my heart may fail, but **God is the strength of my heart** and my portion forever.]

Satisfaction in His Presence (3, 4): More than aesthetics, people, and programs - place to **meet the living God**. Whole person swept up in desire for presence of God (to love God with all of heart, strength-body, and mind) unified desire to be with God. The beloved presence of God. Longings for eternal and "not yet" things that we can't see. "Sanctified envy" for birds and priests who live in temple - "I want to be where you are . . . to continually praise my God!"

4. Finding Strength in Pilgrim's Journey (5-9)

Those who trust in Lord have a life principle and vitality that transcends - those with gift of faith have a great blessing - anxiety can be a dominating force in our hearts but God's presence is lasting help for the restless heart. Journey on highways to Zion (Jerusalem) starts with desire for obedience and a passion to be with presence of God - impulse to be where He is. Biblical obedience is delight in His presence fused with action. Places of trouble: Baca Valley (transformed from tears and weeping, drought, and trouble - to place - strength place of springs. His presence generates praise to displace tears and trouble. The transforming presence of the Lord shifts tragedy into triumphs - difficulties are stepping-stones to seeing God's work - it is a gift to see this.

5. The Presence of God (10-12)

Spectrum of preference: Doorkeeper in the temple (greeter) to dwelling in the tents of wickedness. Longing for God's presence, to be with people of God in worship - abandonment of earthly motivations - better here on threshold of presence than to have what wicked have to offer. The "cribs" of wealthy are nothing compared to being with Jesus - even a remote corner of heaven better than earthly mansion - we need to renew and clarify our affections. Stability and anchoring in midst of change - we are in hand of Christ who will not let us go

God is Sun and Shield: - He gives grace and glory - God is so completely sovereign. There is no safer place on face of earth but to be in His presence.

No good thing will He withhold: We have direct blessings and grace given in Jesus. Every spiritual blessing - Ephesians 1:3 He give favour and honour to those who journey blamelessly, trusting Him

Practicing the Presence of God:

<https://d2y1pz2y630308.cloudfront.net/15471/documents/2016/10/Brother%20Lawrence-The%20Practice%20of%20the%20Presence%20of%20God.pdf>

Part 2: **From Strength to Strength: Sustained by God's Indwelling. Texts: Acts 19 and Ephesians**