

“The Heart of the True Believer – Part 1”
Psalm 84
(Preached at Trinity, October 16, 2011)

I’m supplying these notes for the benefit of busy pastors who may be engaged in bi-vocational work, feeling the pressure of preparing to preach twice on the Lord’s Day while trying to balance full-time secular work as well as caring for their families. While the notes of another man are no substitute for personal study, I pray that these may aid in the process of preparing to preach.

Disclaimer: These are the actual notes I bring with me to the pulpit, which I follow loosely. They are not designed for publication. While I try to make every effort to give proper credit to my sources from the pulpit, adequate citations will sometimes be absent from my notes. If anyone feels their intellectual material has been used without adequate citation, please contact me and I’ll make immediate correction giving credit.

1. **Psalm 84** is a beautiful piece of Scripture that lifts our hearts on high. We can read it over and over and each time its words refresh us.
Spurgeon wrote of **Psalm 84** – “This sacred ode is one of the choicest of the collection; it has a mild radiance about it, entitling it to be called *The Pearl of Psalms*. If the twenty-third be the most popular, the one-hundred- and third the most joyful, the one-hundred-and-nineteenth the most deeply experimental, the fifty-first the most plaintive, this is one of the most sweet of the Psalms of peace.”
2. It would seem that each commentary has a particular focus as to its meaning, most emphasizing some aspect of the Temple worship experience.
 - A. Many believe it was written by David during one of his exiles lamenting his separation from the temple.
Calvin: “David complains of his being deprived of liberty of access to the Church of God.”
David Dickson writing in the 17th century agrees – “This psalm agrees well with the time of David’s parting with the ark, when he fled from Absalom.”
John Gill – “The spirit it breathes and the language in which it was written show it to be *David’s*—when he fled from his son Absalom.”
 - B. Some, on the other hand, hold that it speaks of Jewish pilgrims in general making their way up to Jerusalem for one of the three annual feasts.
Spurgeon – “Pilgrimages to the tabernacle were a grand feature of Jewish life. Families journeyed together, making bands which grew at each halting place; they camped in sunny glades, sang in unison along the roads, toiled together over the hill and through the slough, and as they went along, stored up happy memories which would never be forgotten. One who was debarred the holy company of the pilgrims, and the devout worship of the congregation, would find in this Psalm fit expression for his mournful spirit.”
 - C. James Montgomery Boice wrote that it speaks of the Temple janitor. He titles it “The Psalm of the Janitors.” “What this chapter teaches is that God took pains to appoint specific men to be the gatekeepers or janitors of the temple and honored them for rendering that service.”
3. Instead of limiting the exposition of the psalm only to thoughts of the temple worship experience I want us to see the fuller expression that speaks loudly here. **Psalm 84** clearly reveals the heart of its author. It speaks of the experience of the genuine believer; it reveals the heart of the true child of God. You can feel the psalmist’s passion for God and love for His worship.
Psalm 84:2 KJV - "my heart and my flesh crieth out for the living God."

- A. We live in a day in which the miracle of Christian conversion has been reduced to a mere expression of allowing Jesus some place in your life while you continue to hold on to all of your other idols. With multitudes of people who profess to be Christians there is no love for God or for His worship, no hunger and thirst after righteousness, no desire for prayer, no love of God's people or passion for the work of the church.
- B. Salvation results in a transformation of life:
A.W. Pink wrote in his book *Saving Faith* – “Faith is not inactive but energetic. It is a mighty principle of power, diffusing spiritual energy to all the faculties of the soul and enlisting them in the service of God. Faith is a principle of life by which the Christian lives unto God; a principle of motion, by which he walks to Heaven, along the highway of holiness; a principle of strength by which he opposes the flesh, the world, and the Devil.”
John MacArthur wrote in *The Gospel According to Jesus* – “Faith expresses itself in submission and obedience. Christians follow Christ. They are committed unquestionably to Christ as Lord and Savior. They desire to please God. (p.220)
John Piper wrote in “Desiring God” – “Once we had no delight in God, and Christ was just a vague historical figure. What we enjoyed was food and friendships and productivity and investments and vacations and hobbies and games and reading and shopping and sex and sports and art and TV and travel ... but not God. He was an idea—even a good one—and a topic for discussion; but He was not a treasure of delight. Then something miraculous happened. It was like the opening of the eyes of the blind during the golden dawn. First the stunned silence before the unspeakable beauty of holiness. Then the shock and terror that we had actually loved the darkness. Then the settling stillness of joy that this is the soul's end. The quest is over. We would give anything if we might be granted to live in the presence of this glory forever and ever.”
4. This is what we find in **Psalm 84**. We find the heart of one who has experienced God's transforming grace. I agree to some extent with James Montgomery Boice that this psalm is not about saints in exile but of saints serving with joy within the Temple. The superscription reads:
 "To the chief Musician upon Gittith, A Psalm for the sons of Korah."
- A. This is the Korah, the great-grandson of Levi, and grandson of Kohath who perished by a divine judgment for rising up against the authority of Moses and Aaron.
Numbers 16:32-33 – “And the earth opened her mouth, and swallowed them up, and their houses, and all the men that *appertained* unto Korah, and all *their* goods. ³³ They, and all that *appertained* to them, went down alive into the pit, and the earth closed upon them: and they perished from among the congregation.”
- B. For some reason the sons of Korah were spared from the destruction of their father and allowed to continue in the service of the Temple. It would seem that these men became models of God's grace and mercy and in gratitude they dedicated themselves to God and spent their days laboring among the holy things of God and preparing music that would honor and glorify God. It demonstrates to us that God can save the children of the most wicked parents.

- C. In the wilderness the Kohathites were responsible for the care of the holy things of the Temple. They were forbidden to touch them or even look at them, but their duty was to carry them as Israel traveled from one place to another.
- D. After the exile the sons of Korah were also assigned to be the keepers of the temple gates
- 1 Chronicles 26:1 NAU** - "For the divisions of the gatekeepers *there were* of the Korahites, Meshelemiah the son of Kore, of the sons of Asaph."
1. We read in **Verse 10** that the writer of this psalm performed this duty with honor and delight.
Psalms 84:10 KJV - "I had rather be a doorkeeper in the house of my God, than to dwell in the tents of wickedness."
 2. Do you see the unique tone of this psalm? It isn't speaking of someone separated from the Temple but someone very much involved in the Temple—he was daily in the temple. But instead of becoming apathetic towards the things of God he only grew more passionate. Returning to his home in the evenings he couldn't wait to return.
Psalms 84:2 KJV - "My soul longeth, yea, even fainteth for the courts of the LORD"
5. As we look at the heart of true believer in **Psalms 84** I want to divide it into four points: The heart of a true believer will find:
- I. Comfort in worship – **Verses 1-4**
 - II. Confidence in trial – **Verses 5-7**
 - III. Continuance in prayer – **Verses 8-9**
 - IV. Consecration in life – **Verses 10-12**
6. Due to the weightiness of the subject I'll cover the material over the course of two sermons, the first two points this week and the final two next week.
- I. The heart of a true believer will find Comfort in worship – **Verses 1-4**
- A. The Psalmist's greatest desire was to be where God is
 1. **Psalms 84:1 KJV** - "How amiable are thy tabernacles, O LORD of hosts!"
Psalms 84:1 NAU - "How lovely are Your dwelling places,"
 - a. The word can be translated "beloved"
Listen to Moses use the word as he describes God's blessings upon the tribe of Benjamin
Deuteronomy 33:12 KJV – "And of Benjamin he said, The beloved of the LORD shall dwell in safety by him; *and the LORD* shall cover him all the day long, and he shall dwell between his shoulders."
 - b. The psalmist loved being where God was. This describes a close relationship – an intimate communion.
 2. His greatest desire was resting in the presence of God
Listen to David in **Psalms 27**
Psalms 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."

3. For the psalmist there was nothing sweeter
Psalm 84:2 KJV - "My soul longeth, yea, even fainteth for the courts of the LORD: my heart and my flesh crieth out for the living God."
 4. In **Verse 3** he compares it with the birds that had made their nests in the temple. It was their home. It was their place of comfort. So it is with the Christian. He is most happy when he is in the presence of God.
In the context of **Verse 4** the psalmist seems to be in envy of the birds who have the Temple as their continual dwelling.
Psalm 84:4 KJV - "Blessed *are* they that dwell in thy house"
 5. As we see this as applying to the Kohathites they were around the holy things of God day by day – they were the Levites.
Yet, the writer of this psalm never lost the sense of wonder. He wanted more and more of God.
"my heart and my flesh crieth out for the living God."
- B. His heart is filled with song
Psalm 84:2 KJV - "my heart and my flesh crieth out for the living God."
1. The word for "cry out" literally implies a shout for joy. It implies song.
ESV - "my heart and flesh sing for joy to the living God."
NAS - "My heart and my flesh sing for joy to the living God."
 2. Don't forget the sons of Korah are musicians.
 3. There are two extremes that we must guard against
 - a. On one hand there are those who clap and dance and sway with loud music and sing with worship songs void of substance.
 - b. On the other end of the spectrum is music rich in theology that is sung with a complete lack of any expression of emotion or joy—with some barely singing at all.
 - c. Listen to the psalmist:
"my heart and my flesh crieth out for the living God."
The "heart" signifying the inner man
The "flesh" signifying the mechanics of the voice
 - d. Worship is both!! The mechanics of singing along with the emotion of joy
 4. The psalmist is demonstrating a heart enflamed by God
- C. This should be the heart of every believer.
1. At the very substance of our transformed heart is a longing for God
This has become the substance of our life – a love for His fellowship; a desire for ever sweeter communion.
 2. In the 27th Psalm David said this was his one, single desire—the thing that consumed him above everything else—to be in the presence of God.
"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
 3. You have heard me often say, "People do what they *want* to do."
They will find some way to satisfy their desires.
Paul described perilous times when men love pleasure more than God.
 - a. David declared that there was one thing he desired above everything else.

- b. The psalmist in this passage is echoing the same thought
Psalm 84:2 KJV - "My soul longeth, yea, even fainteth for the courts of the LORD"
4. What is your chief desire? What place does God have in your life?
 Jonathan Edwards in *Religious Affections* – "True religion is evermore a powerful thing; and the power of it appears, in the first place in the inward exercises of it in the heart, where is the principal and original seat of it."
5. These desires and longings for God come in varying degrees and intensity. I don't to discourage the weak or wound the tender hearted.
- a. Pastors walk a precarious line – we never want to wound a tender soul. Jesus was both firm speaking hard things, and yet tender towards those seeking Him.
Matthew 12:20 KJV - "A bruised reed shall he not break, and smoking flax shall he not quench, till he send forth judgment unto victory."
- b. A brother or sister with a contrite heart may feel themselves barely hanging on to God, but still they reach for Him. Still, they have a longing for Him.
- c. Still they long to dwell in the house of God - **Verse 4**
Psalm 84:4 NAU - "How blessed are those who dwell in Your house! They are ever praising You."
- d. Jonathan Edwards: "And though true grace has various degrees, and there are some that are but babes in Christ, in whom the exercise of the inclination and will, towards divine and heavenly things, is comparatively weak; yet everyone that has the power of godliness in his heart, has his inclinations and heart exercised towards God and divine things"
6. These words are not meant to discourage, but to encourage. Is your heart's desire to be at the side of God?
 Though you feel unworthy and your sin seems like a mighty weight, you find His gracious forgiveness in Christ and you come to with joy before His throne of mercy.

II. The heart of a true believer will find Confidence in trial – **Verses 5-7**

Psalm 84:5 KJV - "Blessed is the man whose strength is in thee"

- A. The believer has discovered the source of all strength
1. Our strength is not our own
Ephesians 6:10 – "Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might."
2. This is the essence of our faith. Of Abraham we read:
Romans 4:20 – "He staggered not at the promise of God through unbelief; but was strong in faith, giving glory to God;"
3. The man who trusts God finds strength that is beyond himself
 God has proven Himself mighty time and time again – the child of God has found Him sufficient

- B. The true believer sees his life as a pilgrimage
1. The psalmist describes it in **Verse 5**
Psalm 84:5 NKJ - "Whose heart *is* set on pilgrimage."
Psalm 84:5 NAS - "In whose heart are the highways *to Zion!*"
 2. It is a wilderness full of difficulties – yet we find refreshment in God
 “Baca” is found only here but it means “weeping”
 In the places of weeping we find the rich blessings of God.
Psalm 84:6 NAS - "they make it a spring, The early rain also covers it with blessings."
 3. Our comfort is not found in anything of this world. We are not promised a life free from difficulty—quite the opposite. Yet, we find our strength and comfort in Christ.
2 Samuel 22:2-4 KJV - "The LORD *is* my rock, and my fortress, and my deliverer; ³ The God of my rock; in him will I trust: *he is* my shield, and the horn of my salvation, my high tower, and my refuge, my saviour; thou savest me from violence. ⁴ I will call on the LORD, *who is* worthy to be praised: so shall I be saved from mine enemies."
2 Samuel 22:17-20 KJV - "He sent from above, he took me; he drew me out of many waters; ¹⁸ He delivered me from my strong enemy, *and* from them that hated me: for they were too strong for me. ¹⁹ They prevented me in the day of my calamity: but the LORD was my stay. ²⁰ He brought me forth also into a large place: he delivered me, because he delighted in me."

Conclusion:

1. These are the ones the psalmist calls blessed.
Psalm 84:5 KJV - "Blessed *is* the man whose strength *is* in thee"
Psalm 34:8 KJV - "O taste and see that the LORD *is* good: blessed *is* the man *that* trusteth in him."
2. There is no greater blessing than to live with our hearts enflamed towards God. This can only happen through Christ, by His Spirit.
2 Corinthians 13:14 NAU - "The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit, be with you all."

Amen