

FOLLOWING THE EXAMPLE OF TWO INSIGNIFICANT BIRDS

Psalm 84

Intro: For many years I have read a Psalm every day, and some days I read several Psalms. As soon as I finish Psalm 150, I start over with Psalm 1, and I expect to keep doing this as long as I live. The more I read them, the more I love them. The Psalms teach us many things about God, all Three Persons of the Godhead. They teach us how to pray. And they teach us how to worship God. There is much more to worship than having a worship team lead us in singing songs. Worship is a personal matter, a personal matter between each one of us and God. I doubt if we can do much worshipping of God in public if we are not worshipping the Lord in private.

To worship the Lord is to focus our attention on Him. In worship we recognize how great and glorious God is, and we are exhorted in the Psalms to “talk of all his wondrous works.” King David was teaching his people to worship when he gave them the words we find in 1 Chronicles 16:8-13 and which are repeated in Psalm 105. Listen to what he told them:

8 Give thanks unto the Lord, call upon his name, make known his deeds among the people.

9 Sing unto him, sing psalms unto him, talk ye of all his wondrous works.

10 Glory ye in his holy name: let the heart of them rejoice that seek the Lord.

11 Seek the Lord and his strength, seek his face continually.

12 Remember his marvellous works that he hath done, his wonders, and the judgments of his mouth;

Now if we are going to worship the Lord it means that we are going to need to get acquainted with the Bible. This means reading it, and re-reading it. It means that we are going to be asking the Lord to teach us from the Word, to prepare our hearts to pray and to worship (although prayer has to be a part of worship).

In John 4 when the Lord Jesus was talking to the Samaritan woman she raised the question about how Jews and Samaritans differed as to the proper place to worship (which in those days was important as we shall see in our Psalm for today). But this is what the Lord said to her. These words are found in John 4:21-24:

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21 Jesus saith unto her, Woman, believe me, the hour cometh, when ye shall neither in this mountain, nor yet at Jerusalem, worship the Father.

22 Ye worship ye know not what: we know what we worship: for salvation is of the Jews.

23 But the hour cometh, and now is, when the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth: for the Father seeketh such to worship him.

24 God is a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth.

The Lord was saying that worship is personal, and that it must come from our hearts. Just because we call a church service a worship service, does not mean that any true worship is going on. Worship is personal, and it must come from our hearts. It is a spiritual matter.

Now in OT times worship was definitely related to a place. That place, first of all, was the Tabernacle in the wilderness, or desert. Then it was the Temple in Jerusalem. The Lord's people worshiped the Lord in their homes, in secluded places. You will remember how the Lord spent whole nights by Himself in prayer. Temple worship had been corrupted in our Lord's day, but it was still important. We are going to learn that the first thing that the children of Israel did when they went back to Jerusalem following their captivity, was to rebuild the Temple—even before they built the wall around the city.

In Psalm 137 we read about something that happened to the Jews, probably many times while they were in exile in Babylon. Let me read to you the first part of that Psalm so you can see how the Jewish exiles felt about Jerusalem. I am reading from Ps 137, verses 1-6:

1 By the rivers of Babylon, there we sat down, yea, we wept, when we remembered Zion.

2 We hanged our harps upon the willows in the midst thereof.³
For there they that carried us away captive required of us a song; and they that wasted us required of us mirth, saying, Sing us one of the songs of Zion.

4 How shall we sing the Lord's song in a strange land?

5 If I forget thee, O Jerusalem, let my right hand forget her cunning.

6 If I do not remember thee, let my tongue cleave to the roof of my mouth; if I prefer not Jerusalem above my chief joy.

The Jewish people who knew the Lord could pray anywhere, like we

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Christians do today. But Jerusalem had a special place in their lives because that was where God dwelt in a special way among His people.

Now I have gone through all of this because in the Psalm we are looking at today, the Temple in Jerusalem is especially prominent. And different terms are used to refer to the Temple. Let me point them out for you.

- 1) See the word “tabernacles” in verse 1.
- 2) Notice “the courts of the Lord” in verse 2.
- 3) In verse 3 we have three references: “an house” and “a nest” and “thine altars.”
- 4) In verse 4, “Thy house.”
- 5) The “well” in verse 6 is probably a reference to the Temple.
- 6) In verse 7 we have “Zion.”
- 7) In verse 10 we have two expressions that refer to the Temple: “Thy courts” and “the house of my God.”

This makes a total of ten references to the Temple.

In the heading of this Psalm it mentions a “gittith” which was a musical instrument of some kind which was used to accompany the people as they sang this Psalm, as was the case in Psalm 8 and Psalm 81. But we don’t know much more than that about the instrument. “The sons of Korah” were Levites, and they were one of the special choirs.

The language of the Psalm indicates that the people were not in Jerusalem. Where they were we cannot tell. The wording of the Psalm seems to indicate that the temple was standing. But it also clearly indicates that in the minds of the people the important thing about the Temple was that it was where the presence of God was so gloriously revealed and keenly felt.

The divisions of the Psalm

Many expositors relate this Psalm to Psalms 42 and 43 which we had last Sunday.

The word “Selah” at the end of verse 4, and again at the end of verse 8 seems to indicate that the Psalm is divided into three parts with four verses in each.

Each division has a beatitude: verse 4 in the first; verse 5 in the second; verse 12 in the third at the end of the Psalm.

The exposition

I. Psalm 84:1-4.

Verse 1 leaves no doubt but that this was the loveliest place on earth to the devout Jews. It was glorious in itself, but what made it so precious to the people was that it was the tabernacles (all of its rooms) of “the Lord of hosts.” This name of God in verse 1 is repeated in verses 3, 8, and 12. It speaks of the great number of people and angels who constitute a mighty army of the Lord. It speaks of the Lord’s sovereign power.

The two statements in verse 2 make it very clear that the longing which the Psalmist felt for “the courts of the Lord” because that was where he would find “the living God.” The place was made so infinitely desirable because of the Person that was there. We must never allow the blessings of the Lord to obscure the Lord Himself. His greatness and His glory are what make the place so delightful. Without our loved ones, are homes are only houses, but with our loved ones there, the house becomes a home. That is how the Jews felt about the Lord of hosts.

When we come to verse 3 we come to the first of two illustrations that the Psalmist wrote about, and which the Korahites sang. I don’t think that the meaning of this verse is that there were sparrows and swallows all over the place, but it indicates that occasionally these birds would get in, and it was their intention to make their nest there, and to have a family. What a message this was to the Jews. And what a lesson it should be for us. These insignificant birds (can I call them worthless birds?) chose the best place on earth to raise their offspring. What an example they should be to us, and what an example they should have been to the Jews! How important it is for us to make sure that our homes are places where our children are going to be raised to know and love and live for the Lord! And then the church today comes next.

Now if that is the case, then this brings the first of the three beatitudes into play in the lives of our children. They should learn to know the Lord and to live for the Lord and to praise the Lord. I don’t know what the sparrow and swallow went through to decide on making their home in the Temple because I am neither a sparrow nor a swallow, but the lesson for

us all is very clear. And the beatitude of verse 4 is the promise of blessing.

II. Psalm 84:5-8.

This stanza in the Psalm seems to show that the way to Zion, to Jerusalem, may not be possible. But all of the people of God can find their way to the Lord, and the results will be the same.

In verse 5 we have the same blessing promised to those who are not in Jerusalem where the Temple is, as those who are in Jerusalem and have access to the Temple. The main point is that all, whether in the Temple or not, must find their strength in the Lord, and another reading of the last part of verse 5 is, "And in whose heart are the highways to Zion" (NASB).

So the point is that the one we need is the Lord, and the Lord deals with us wherever we are in the same way.

The way will not be easy. JFB refer this to what David experienced of humiliation and hardship when he had to flee from Absalom, but the blessing of the Lord never fails to provide pools for refreshment. And in our desire to be with the Lord, whether away from Jerusalem, or on the way to Jerusalem, we go from one degree of strength to a higher degree. And all, in one way or the other, appear before God.

So even in those days there was no excuse for anyone not to be walking with the Lord, growing stronger and stronger, and becoming more like the Lord wants us to be. This is to be made like our blessed Lord.

Verse 8 concludes this second part with a fervent prayer for the blessing of the Lord. Addressing God as the "God of Jacob," takes us back to Genesis 32 where Jacob's name was changed to Israel because he had power with God and prevailed.

III. Psalm 84:9-12.

This section gives us the conclusion of the Psalm.

Note the Psalmist spoke of "our shield," not my Shield. Some say that the "anointed" is Christ. Some say he is the King. But it seems to me to be sufficient if he is referring to the two companies of people, those in

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Jerusalem and those elsewhere, but all get the same blessing as the elect of God.

Two very wonderful statements are given here in verse 10:

- 1) A day in the Lord's court is better than a thousand any place else.
- 2) In line with the humility expressed by the sparrow and swallow, the Psalmist declares that he would rather be a doorkeeper in the house of the Lord, than to dwell in the tents of wickedness. In the Lord's presence is fulness of joy, and at His right hand there are pleasures forevermore" (Psa. 16:11).

Verse 11 is a verse of promises.

Verse 12 is an eternal truth. See also Prov. 3:5-6.

Concl: There is absolutely no valid excuse for any of us not to be walking with the Lord, and experiencing His blessing just as His disciples did when they walked in His physical presence while He was here on earth. We are never out of His presence, so help is always available to all of us all of the time!