

Better One Day in your Courts

Loving the Visible Church

Ps 84:1 *To the choirmaster: according to The Gittith. A Psalm of the Sons of Korah.*

How lovely is your dwelling place, O LORD of hosts!

² My soul longs, yes, faints for the courts of the LORD; my heart and flesh sing for joy to the living God.

³ Even the sparrow finds a home, and the swallow a nest for herself, where she may lay her young, at your altars, O LORD of hosts, my King and my God.

⁴ Blessed are those who dwell in your house, ever singing your praise!

Selah

⁵ Blessed are those whose strength is in you, in whose heart are the highways to Zion.

⁶ As they go through the Valley of Baca they make it a place of springs; the early rain also covers it with pools.

⁷ They go from strength to strength; each one appears before God in Zion.

⁸ O LORD God of hosts, hear my prayer; give ear, O God of Jacob!

Selah

⁹ Behold our shield, O God; look on the face of your anointed!

¹⁰ For a day in your courts is better than a thousand elsewhere. 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 bestows favor and honor. No good thing does he withhold from those who walk uprightly.

¹² O LORD of hosts, blessed is the one who trusts in you!

A STRANGE PASSAGE

IN HIS SERMON ON PSALM 84, **James Boice** tells a story of his predecessor at 10th Presbyterian church in Philadelphia—**Donald Grey Barnhouse** while he was in seminary at the turn of the last century. “He knew a student who seemed unable to take anything spiritual seriously. This student was with him at a prayer meeting at which the leader asked each person to give a Bible verse that had been a special blessing. When his turn came, this student said quite solemnly, “First Chronicles 26:18.””¹ As soon as I read this, I looked back at the section heading in this part of his sermon and started to giggle to myself, which is probably not good because Boice was trying to introduce our psalm with on a rather serious note.

But I couldn't help myself, because I knew exactly what this verse said for a reason that was not the same context as Barnhouse, but was nevertheless meant to be funny. And in

¹ **James M. Boice**, *Psalms 42–106: An Expositional Commentary* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2005), 688.

fact it was. I don't remember the exact circumstances, but one night around the dinner table, the idea of life-verses somehow came up and how they are never sad or angry verses. My dad told us this story of being at some rather serious meeting of Christians and they were sharing verses together and this guy stands up and reads **1Ch 26:26-18** in the KJV, “*To Shuppim and Hosah the lot came forth westward, with the gate Shallecheth, by the causeway of the going up, ward against ward. Eastward were six Levites, northward four a day, southward four a day, and toward Asuppim two and two. At Parbar westward, four at the causeway, and two at Parbar.*” And the guy sat down. And we all laughed around the table.

Why is it so funny? Because it is basically nonsensical to us. And literally, no one would have a life verse like this. That's kind of why the same passage was read in that seminary class long ago, though Barnhouse said that student's purposes were to mock the Bible as the inspired word of God. We had no hint of that over our dinner table. But, of course, the verse isn't nonsensical, at least to an original hearer. And it actually is a great way to introduce our Psalm if we understand what it is saying.

Shuppim and **Hosah** are names of Levites, and the chapter is explaining the assignment of service to them and others in the temple. Recall that Aaron was a Levite (Levi is the son of Jacob). The promise for temple service went through Levi. Aaron's sons became the priests and were responsible for overseeing the sacrifices. But there were many other Levites, including his cousin Korah who was killed in the wilderness for his wicked rebellion. But some of his descendants lived, and they became the sons of Korah, whom we have seen composed several psalms, including Ps 84-85 & 87-88.

In 1 Chronicles 26, various of these same sons of Korah are being stationed as **gatekeepers** or, as Boice calls them, **janitors** around the four sides of the temple. This is what the funny words *asuppim* and *parbar* are referring to. The translators of the KJV didn't know what those words were talking about, so they are simply transliterated from the Hebrew. But today we know that *asuppim* (*asoph*) was a **storehouse**, and *parbar* was a structure on the west side of the colonnade, possibly a **court**. Thus the ESV is a lot easier to understand, “**For Shuppim and Hosah [the lot] came out for the west, at the gate of Shallecheth on the road that goes up.**”

Watch corresponded to watch. On the east there were six [guards/gatekeepers] each day, on the north four each day, on the south four each day, as well as two and two at the gatehouse. And for the colonnade on the west there were four at the road and two at the colonnade.” And thus God put exactly the men he wanted at exactly the place that he wanted so that they might serve before him night and day.

A BURDEN OR A DELIGHT?

Psalm 84 is one of the great, if not the greatest song about worshiping God in the place where he has chosen to put his Name. In Deuteronomy, Moses had **commanded**, “But you shall seek the place that the LORD your God will choose out of all your tribes to put his Name and make his habitation there. There you shall go, and there you shall bring your burnt offerings and your sacrifices, your tithes and the contribution that you present, your vow offerings, your freewill offerings, and the firstborn of your herd and of your flock” (**Deut 12:5-6**).

Another word for a **command** is the law. It was a law that the Israelites would go to that special place to offer

worship. But as law then, just as with the law today, some might have considered it a burden rather than a joy. We often feel that way about commands. They are burdensome, tiring, and heavy. “Yet, we know that the law is good, if one uses it lawfully, understanding this, that the law is not laid down for the just but for the lawless and disobedient” (1Ti 1:8-9). Therefore, even if the journey would have been difficult or a financial burden upon someone, the law of going to the temple could have been received as either a joy, depending upon one’s relationship to the LORD. Most probably saw it most of the time as a great joy.

Psalm 84 sees it this way, while indirectly revealing that if you do not sing this song from your own heart, that you are living under this law as a burden. It is stationed at this part of the Psalter for some very good reasons. Here are some of them. **First**, like all of the songs in Book III, it is part of this ongoing dialogue of psalms that move back and forth between lament and hope.² This one is a song of great hope.

Second, it follows three songs that describe the “walk of the wicked (81-83)” while beginning a set of three songs that

² Recall our chart back in our study of Psalm 73.

“portray the walk of the righteous (84-86).”³ We will look at this theme with those last three songs together next time.

Third, it picks up where Psalm 80 left off, “portraying ... one individual who stands out from the rest.” This is seen in the return of the word “harken” or “give ear” (80:2; 84:8) that come from the mouth of the inspired psalmist. Listen to them together. “Give ear, O Shepherd of Israel, you who lead Joseph like a flock. You who are enthroned upon the cherubim, shine forth” and “O LORD God of hosts, hear my prayer; give ear, O God of Jacob!” In both Psalms, God gives hears and answers through his Messiah. “Let your hand be on the man of your right hand, the son of man whom you have made strong for yourself” (80:17) and “Behold our shield, O God; look on the face of your Anointed!” (84:9).

Fourth, Psalm 84 begins a new set of five psalms, four of which are psalms of the songs of Korah (84-85, 87-88). Only a song of David sits between them. In it we have the Anointed (Messiah) spoken of in Psalm 84 now speaking in Psalm 86. The point is, we can and should be reading Psalm 84 together with the songs around it.

³ Robert Cole, *The Shape and Message of Book III*, 118. The wicked “walk” in 81:13, 14; 82:5; 83:5 while the righteous “walk” in 84:12; 85:14; 86:11.

That said, we'll save this way of looking at our Psalm for next time. Because truth be told, we can always read a song just by itself. That's what we want to do today as we consider *its glorious theme*, which is not anything but a burden, of *being blessed by God and rejoicing in the house of the LORD*. I pray it will be that for you.

PSALM 84: HOW LOVELY IS THE DWELLING PLACE OF THE LORD

Psalm 84 is another song “*to the choirmaster*” or “*for the End*” (LXX). Try to always remember that the LXX's rendering makes the song *a pointing forward* to something or someone beyond itself. It is *according to the Gittith*, or “*concerning the winepresses*” (a phrase only see in **8:1** and **81:1**). And, it is a Psalm of the sons of Korah. That makes it a song written by those who were stationed as gatekeepers in the temple of God.

“*How lovely is your dwelling place, O LORD of hosts!*” (**Ps 84:1**). “*Dwelling place*” (*mishkan*) is the *first of seven references* to the place of God on earth. Obviously, the number seven is symbolic. Thus, the song describes the

perfect place of God's dwelling amongst men. The others are his courts (*chatser*; vs. 2), altars (*mizbeach*; vs. 3), house (*bayith*; vs. 4), Zion (vs. 7), courts and house again (vs. 11).

What kind of a person sings such a thing? A person who loves and enjoys being in the presence of God *with the rest of his saints*. It is this corporate aspect of worship that I want to bring out for a moment. This is not a psalm about going to your prayer closet or having private devotions in the morning, as good as those may be. It is a psalm about going with God's people to the corporate worship of God. Therefore, it is a song about loving the corporate worship of God and all that it entails. Each verse brings out a new thing that helps you see what all this involves.

Vs. 1 is the confession that God's dwelling place is lovely. This God is Yahweh of Hosts. It is the title of God given to the One who sits enthroned above the cherubim, who commands the armies of the LORD. As such, this dwelling place could be considered the heavenly dwelling, as in Isaiah 6. That dwelling place is lovely beyond description because of its otherworld qualities and because the Lord of Glory—Jesus Christ—was sitting on the throne (John 12:41).

If the dwelling place of God on earth is patterned after the one in heaven (**Heb 8:5**), then obviously, the earthly dwelling would be lovely as well. When you consider something as “lovely,” what does it do to the inner part of your being? Does it make you sad, depressed, bored, tired, inattentive, turned off? Does it make you long for anything but that lovely thing, drawing your affections away from it to anything else you can possibly think of?

Of course not. Instead, it causes you to long, to ache, to pine, to thirst, to hunger after *that* thing. Hence, **vs. 2**, “**My soul longs, yes faints for the courts of the LORD...**” Here we have a Psalmist who has seen the true loveliness of the courts of the LORD. He is like the beloved in the Song of Solomon when he sings, “**Strengthen me with raisins, refresh me with apples, for I am faint with love**” (**SS 2:5 NIV**). This is how he feels about being in the presence of God with his people.

And yet, just here, so many have the opposite feeling when they think about the courts of the LORD. Many find it hard to get out of bed or think they have many better or at least more pressing and important things to do than go to church. Words like “boring” and “tradition” and

“irrelevant” are words that unbelievers and believers alike will use to describe God’s house, which is why in a churchy pop-culture dominated by democracy, the last forty years has seen **the total upheaval of the meaning of what church is** in order to try to eliminate those words from people’s vocabulary. We have redefined 2,000 years of church which was the gathering of God’s people, to a gathering of people we hope might become God’s people.

But it isn’t working. Barna’s research continues to show this redefining of what worship is and who it is for is only making things worse. 39% of men who say they “love Jesus” now say they “don’t love the church.” That number rises to 61% when it is women answering.⁴ A *Youtube* phenomena swept across social media several years ago when one **Jefferson Bathke** uploaded his rap, “**Why I Hate Religion, but Love Jesus.**” It has nearly 33,000,000 hits. Clearly, this is a problem that is only growing.

What is the way to counter this? **Redefine** how you do church to appeal to those who by their very nature couldn’t possibly love its essence? Again, that isn’t working. Some

⁴ “Meet Those Who ‘Love Jesus but Not the Church,” *Barna* (Mar 30, 2017), <https://www.barna.com/research/meet-love-jesus-not-church/>.

have tried **legalism**, that is pounding Sabbath observance in the law into people's hearts so that they basically fear not going. But while Sabbath keeping (which certainly includes corporate worship) is certainly included in the Ten Commandments, Psalm 84's tactic is the opposite. Instead of beating you to death with a God who will punish you for disobeying him, **the Psalm invites you** to see how lovely are his dwelling places, so lovely that they cause its author to long and faint for the courts of the LORD. It does it, remember, through song.

God's people sing. Why? Again, we could say that it is because it is commanded. But if you only sing because it is commanded, it is a tradition, it is something in the worship service that you are "supposed" to do, then you haven't come to see the loveliness of the dwelling place of the LORD of hosts who sits enthroned above the earth. The words of the song have not entered your heart. It is the longing and fainting heart of the psalmist that causes him to conclude this verse, "**my heart and flesh sing for joy to the living God.**"

It is the spiritual pulse of a Christian whose spiritual heartbeat warms his soul that causes him to sing, not out of

duty, but from the heart. It is the recognition from being made alive in the Spirit that this singing is to “the living God” that causes her heart to burst out in song. The dwelling place of the LORD is lovely because the LORD of hosts is the living God. This is what Yahweh (“LORD”) means: I AM.

I AM, by definition is not only alive, but is Life itself. He causes all life in the universe to exist because he is Life. He was, is, and will be the Life. This Life is so abundant and overflowing that it gives life to all other things. And when a person has come into saving contact with this God, then the desire is to sing praises to this God who is the very giver of their own life. Therefore, they consider the courts of the LORD a lovely place to go, for that is where the LORD is especially present in his Name to give blessing to his people.

Taking his cue from king Solomon who said, “**consider the ant,**” the Psalmist **illustrates this desire** to go near where God is like this by looking at the sparrow and swallow. A couple weeks back during a Sunday School class, we were very rudely interrupted by different kind of bird. Someone went outside to see what the commotion was and it turns out a big ol’ **woodpecker** was pounding away incessantly at

the outside of the building. This is more like considering the fire-ant! That bird was doing the opposite as the Psalmist's sparrow and swallow (unless, I suppose, he merely wanted in so that he could hear about God).

As a gatekeeper in the temple, the Levites would see all that went on in its precincts. This includes sparrows and swallows nesting in the rafters as they found a place to make their home and lay their eggs. Sparrows are sweet little things, Swallows are a bit bigger. But while both chip and sing a lot, they're the opposite of the woodpecker. Thus, the verse says, "Even the sparrow finds a home, and the swallow a nest for herself, where she may lay her young, at your altars, O LORD of hosts, my King and my God" (Ps 84:3).

What is his illustration? It is twofold. **First**, he notices how **even the birds want to make their home near the altars of the LORD of hosts**. After all, he is the God not only of angels and men, but of animals. All God's creatures want to be near to him. But Jesus knows that the peculiar creature called man, however, often has trouble with the very thing the sparrow finds to natural. So he warmly teaches, "**Are not two sparrows sold for a penny? And not one of them will fall to the ground apart from your Father**" (Matt 10:29).

“Not one of them is forgotten before God” (Luke 12:6).
“Fear not! You are of more value than many sparrows”
(Matt 10:31; Luke 12:7).

Someone made the interesting observation that this psalm speaks about these birds’ “young.” This is the second point of the illustration. These birds are bringing their young near to the altars of the LORD. In his treatment of this verse, a pastor named David Thompson points out that this means the house of God is considered by them a place of safety.⁵ He goes on to make the application that must be heeded.

If our little ones are being brought near to the LORD here, then the church must be a safe place for them. He brings up general immorality that children can see in adults, but focuses on the deeply perverted sin of child molestation that has rocked everyone from Rome to Reformed Baptists in recent days. Along somewhat different lines, I was talking to a friend this week about how his son invited an unbelieving very lost and sexually deviant friend to their youth group recently. He called the pastor to let him know,

⁵ David E. Thompson, “Psalms - Message #85: Psalm 84:1-12,”
<https://www.sermonaudio.com/saplayer/playpopup.asp?SID=91617164217>

but forgot to warn the youth pastor. Well, when that youth pastor saw this kid, he made it clear in no uncertain terms that THIS is what this church believes about such things. He showed absolutely no concern for this kid's soul, only making sure that the kid would know that this behavior would not be tolerated. You can imagine exactly how that kid who had never stepped foot in a church before came away from that encounter. Church must be safe, not that we don't talk about sin, but that we don't engage it in it in the name of the LORD!

Our Lord Jesus was known for being a friend of tax collectors and sinners. He had ex-prostitutes among his followers. He befriended them. He never tolerated their sin, but he let them know through his actions that if they would come and learn from him, they would find living water for their souls and those sins that they so treasure and think are going to give them meaning in life would be relinquished and replaced by the loveliness of his courts and the safety of forgiveness in his heavenly Father's arms. That's the point of his sparrow teaching. That's the point of the Psalms' sparrow teaching near the altar—which is where forgiveness is sought. Christ is a friend of sinners and it is difficult to

think of a sin that he would hate more than someone doing something to make children hate him because it was perpetrated in Christ's name.

Now, because he is both King and God (**vs. 3**), **blessings** are mentioned as things that come to those who draw near to his courts. The first blessing is that of **having a heart that sings God's praise**. **“Blessed are those who dwell in your house, ever singing your praise! Selah” (Ps 84:4)**. This is the second-time singing has been brought up in three verses. The point is, the blessing is one of rejoicing. And this ends with one of the two Selah's in the psalm. Pause.

Drawing near to the house of the LORD takes away mourning over the troubles and difficulties of life and replaces it with rejoicing and singing. This has to be a blessing, because it is not something you can make come from yourself. Instead, it is His work.

As we are going to see several more times, those who do not draw near in corporate worship, or do not do so on a regular basis are like the rest of us. They are not always singing or rejoicing. But for some reason, they have not yet understood that it is in coming to God's house that the troubles of life are replaced by the joy of the LORD. This

blessing comes by drawing near to what he and his people are at in special worship. That's what the text says.

A second blessing (I'm not talking about Toronto here) follows it. "Blessed are those whose strength is in you, in whose heart at the highways to Zion" (5). The thought presupposes weakness in life. It presupposes trouble, sorrow, failing, fault, frailty. Why? Because it recognizes that we are not strong in ourselves. Rather, our only strength is in the LORD. But what does this mean?

It has a context in the verse itself. It means "... in whose heart are the highways to Zion." This "highway" to Zion implies travelling to the place where God dwells along many winding roads, descending valleys, and uphill trails of this great highway. In other words, their strength is in the knowing that the LORD will meet them in his house, and as such their journey to corporate worship is their hearts delight, even when it is difficult and long. Israel had many feasts and some of them required going long distances to Jerusalem.

Jesus himself made this journey every year from Galilee (Luke 2:42). On the road he anticipated arriving in Jerusalem and going to Mt. Zion to the temple. You can see

this from the only story we know about him as a young man. Mary and Joseph had taken this very trip. When the feast was over, they were returning home, but their son was not with them. (How do you lose a twelve-year-old boy like this?). They returned to Jerusalem and “after three days they found him in the temple, sitting among the teachers, listening to them and asking them questions” (Luke 2:46). Jesus’ told them, “Did you now know that I must be in my Father’s house?” (49). It was the young Jesus’ greatest delight to finally reach the legal age where he could do such a thing. And all he wanted to do was grow in the grace and knowledge of God in the place where God dwelt. It was his great delight. His strength was in the LORD, because his heart was on the highway to Zion. He knew the blessing he would receive from going to God’s house, a blessing of so much abundance to him that his parents (this is Mary and Joseph we are talking about) should have known it. But Mary did treasure them up in her heart (51) as she herself learned along with the rest of us.

This travelling to Zion and having it be your heart’s delight is again illustrated by the song in the next verse. It speaks about how such a journey is a great refreshing. “As

they go through the Valley of Baca they make it a place of springs; the early rain also covers it with pools” (6). *Baca* is a transliteration, but what does it mean?

The LXX translates it “*valley of weeping.*” It appears to be for any number of valleys of sorrow, like David’s valley of the shadow of death in Psalm 23. It may remember the David’s troops anxiously awaiting the coming Philistine army into the valley of the Rephaim outside of Jerusalem (2Sa 5:24). The image is clear enough from the verse. Times of great sorrow where the soul is a dry desert towards God suddenly has life-giving rain fall upon it while walking through the valley on the road to House of God.

Israel is quite different from Colorado, and yet in some ways it is the same. Each week on the way to church I feel one of these two things. Whenever the mountains are covered in gloomy clouds, it feels like driving through the valley of Baca. But on other mornings, when the sky is clear and blue, as I come over Lookout Road and see down into that Boulder Valley with a newly risen sun reflecting brilliantly on the Flatirons and the Indian Peaks, my heart soars with anticipation for coming with all of you into the Lord’s house together.

This is what corporate worship is supposed like for those who know the Lord. And the thing is, when God is present and the means of grace are there and God's people joyfully anticipate what he will do with us, **great refreshment is there**. The Word is like manna from heaven. The Supper becomes like newly fallen water in a mountain pool. There is nothing we have to do to manipulate or try to manufacture something artificial. It is God's blessing to his people.

The next verse teaches us that this weekly rhythm of life (for them it was also daily and annually) **creates strong Christians**. “**They go from strength to strength; each one appears before God in Zion**” (7). This blessing of becoming a stronger Christian belongs to each and every individual who takes such delight. God leaves none to famine and thirst.

But it raises an important point as we return to thinking about going to church. Those who *go to church* are renewed from strength to strength. I have observed something in my life. Those who go to church weekly grow stronger in their faith. Those who do not *always* grow weaker. These two things rarely fail. Those who do not go to church wonder

why their faith wanes and life's problems overwhelm them. It is because they do not understand the joys of being in the Lord's presence with his people. Being too busy to obey the command of God, they do not realize that they are harming themselves and their children (if they have any). They are not behaving like the sparrow but the woodpecker. Why spurn the good blessings of God? Is there anything on earth more important than the spiritual well-being of your own soul and that of your family? What Christian doesn't desire the things spoken of in this song? Friend, they are right here, every week as the Lord so gracious prepares a table for you to come and delight in him.

This blessing is **for any who would come**. These are in fact some of the very last words of the Bible. “**The Spirit and the Bride say, ‘Come.’ And let the one who hears say, ‘Come.’ And let the one who is thirsty come; let the one who desires take the water of life without price**” (**Rev 22:17**). It is not the Spirit *and the Groom* (Jesus) here who are bidding you come. It is the Spirit *and the Bride*—the church—who are bidding you. It is never too late to know these joys, until you are dead. But how will you be sustained

in this world if you do not recognize the call of God and his church?

Another blessing is to be found here. “O LORD God of hosts, hear my prayer; give ear, O God of Jacob! Selah” (8). This is the second and last **Selah** in the psalm. We pause here because we know that when God’s people come together in worship, **he stands ready to hear their prayers**. In this case, it is the prayer of just one person. He is drawing near to God with something heavy on his mind. But he knows that because he is in God’s house, he will be heard. The very God of the universe will give an ear to his petition.

The next blessing is that in this place **the worshiper will look upon the face of Messiah**. “Behold our shield, O God; look on the face of your Anointed” (Ps 84:9). A shield is another image that the worshiper is in trouble, for you only need shields to defend yourself. God’s people who come to him in worship are the neediest people in the world! But God is the shield to those who take refuge in him (**Prov 30:5**).

The only time a shield is used in the NT it is **likened to faith** (**Eph 6:16**). As we have recently seen, faith has its object in the person and work of Jesus Christ. What is so fascinating

is that God is our shield, and somehow we see this shield in worship. But what is seen? It appears to be Christ even in this verse, for the lyric tells God to look here upon the face of the Anointed, which is the word “Messiah.”

One source I saw this week thought that this referred to [the still future coming of Jesus](#) in a future millennial temple where the world would look upon his face. He got that the verse was about Christ. He also got that it is through the word that we see Christ in worship. But what was missing was Christ’s First Coming where he himself claimed to be both the temple and the face of God to the world. Beloved, our [faith rests in the already accomplished work of Jesus Christ](#) on our behalf, and when we worship him together, that is to be our singular focus, for this is our shield when we leave to go back into the world to face the darts and fiery arrows of the enemy.

I am convinced that one of the reasons church is not safe, is not liked, it not understood as a blessing is [because Christ is absent](#) from most of those gatherings. When we do not gather to sing about him, to think about him, or to worship him, when worship is for us and about us and to us, then we might as well stay in the valley of Baca or outside the walls

pecking away on other things. But where Christ is near as his word, there you have a shield and strength and refreshing waters and safety and joy. It is up to you to believe whether you believe that is actually true.

Verse 10 becomes a very personal word from this psalmist. Remember, it is one of the sons of Korah writing. “For a day in your courts is better than a thousand elsewhere. I would rather be a doorkeeper in the house of my God than dwell in the tents of wickedness.” Without looking at the surrounding psalms, which can be helpful, simply consider that this descendant of Korah would have been quite aware of his own ancestor’s tent of wickedness. For Korah himself died in his own tent when the earth opened up and swallowed him and his rabble alive (**Num 16:27ff**).

Yet, God has graciously spared this treasonous man’s lineage, such that this son of Korah could be given the great privilege of serving in the temple every day of his adult life. Something Korah could have had, but he wanted even more. But think about what this job was. If Boice is right, his job was basically the janitorial duties of the building. And who wants to be a janitor?

I'll tell you one man I once knew did. The man's name was **Keith Tekatz**. He was a very simple man, and at the time was probably in his early fifties. He served as the head janitor of Bethel College and when I was there had already been there many years. Keith was known and loved by everyone in the school, because **Keith was the happiest man I've ever met**. He retired several years ago and the students wanted a new dorm named after him. Keith had no great riches. Keith had a job that I can't imagine anyone here would aspire to. But Keith loved his job and spent every moment of it praising God as he cleaned up vomit, washed toilets, scrubbed away gum, vacuumed endless hallways and corridors and rooms, and all the other things he did. Without Keith, the school couldn't have been run. And Keith understood that, and also knew that it was a blessing in the sight of God to be able to have that work.

For you see, Keith understood this verse. His job was not in a church. But he knew that a day in the courts of the Lord is better than a thousand elsewhere. He would rather be a doorkeeper than dwell in the tents of wickedness. I've been speaking a lot about corporate worship today, and that is for a very good reason. God's people still go to worship, and

frankly, this is a focus that is much needed in a day that where corporate worship is so misunderstood. But in the NT, each Christian is also **a temple of the Holy Spirit**, and therefore, what we are saying about corporate worship can also be said about daily work that you do for God, for all of your work is done where the Spirit now dwells, in the hearts of God's people. Thus, Keith again.

The attitude here is simple. You understand that to be saved means that you stand guard over God's temple every day of your life. You therefore understand that every moment is a decision to be a doorkeeper or to walk in the tents of wickedness. What is said about your individual life is true of your corporate life with the body. Think of the greatest joy you know of in this world. Do you believe that this verse is true or not? If it is, then do not rob yourself by substituting other joys for this.

See instead what the psalmist sees. **“For the LORD God is a sun and shield; the LORD bestows favor and honor. No good thing does he withhold from those who walk uprightly” (Ps 84:11)**. Here **the shield** imagery returns, also now with **the sun**. Malachi calls Jesus the **“sun of**

righteousness” (Mal 4:2) and John calls him the “light of the world” (John 1:9). Here, the psalmist calls him Yahweh.

Here in his house, God bestows favor upon his people, which is another word for *grace*. He bestows *honor* upon them, exalting them even to being called sons of God. He does not withhold any of his graces, but abundantly pours them out like showers from heaven upon you who walk uprightly.

What is your response to these things? Here is the Psalmist. “O LORD of hosts, blessed is the one who trusts in you” (12). Faith returns again. And I want to point out given our recent study of the *solas*, that here in this psalm we find all five. This is God’s word that is telling you these things (*sola scriptura*). The LORD bestows grace (*sola gratia*). Blessed is the one who trusts (*sola fide*) in the Messiah (*solus Christus*). And why is all this done? Because it pleases God to do it (*solus Deo Gloria*).

The way you come to see the beauty of this song is by grace alone through faith alone in Christ alone to the glory of God alone because Scripture alone has shown you the way, the road to Zion, which turns your mourning into laughter, your boredom into excitement, your tears into

smiles, your dryness into plenty. Not that all of your troubles are gone, but that your God is now known to be greater than them all.

Pause long and often on Psalm 84. For it is the great psalm of understanding why you should love Christ's church. Doing so not by beating you over the head, but by opening the veil to allow you to see the treasures inside that God has prepared for his people.