

Psalm 84

by Harry Ironside

The psalm teaches us that God values us and has given his son to die for us, and that we can find refuge in his house.

Duration: 37:33

Scripture: Psalm 84:1-6, Psalm 84:12

Topics: "Christian Life"

Description

In this sermon, the preacher talks about the story of the poor widow who had very little left and was unsure of what to do. He relates this story to the concept of spirals, which were a cheap and common food in Jesus' time. The preacher explains how Jesus reversed the value of spirals by saying that two spirals were sold for a farthing and even five spirals for two spirals. He then shares a personal story of a widow in Scotland who trusted in God despite her financial struggles. The sermon concludes with a reminder to cast our burdens onto God, just like the man in a cartoon who was carrying a heavy load but was offered a seat in a farmer's wagon.

Transcript

May we open the Bible, please, at the 84th psalm. Psalm 84. Our greatest Father, we pause to lift our hearts again to Thee, now as we're turning to Thy holy words, to pray that every person present may hear Thy voice speaking through Thy words, and that there may be an honest response to Thy message.

Undertake for us as we speak to minister Thy truth in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen. Psalm 84.

How amiable are Thy tabernacles, that is, how delightful, how delightful are Thy tabernacles, O Lord of hosts! My soul longeth, yea, even fainteth, for the courts of the Lord, my heart and my flesh cryeth out for the living God. The sparrow hath found a house, and the swallow a nest for herself, where she may lay her young, even thine altars, O Lord of hosts, my King and my God. Blessed are they that dwell in thy house, they will be still praising thee.

Blessed is the man whose strength is in thee, in whose heart are the ways of them, who, passing through the valley of data, that is, the valley of weeping, the mulberry tree valley, make it that well the rain also filleth the pools. They go from strength to strength, every one of them in Zion appeareth before God. O Lord God of hosts, hear my prayer, give ear O God of data.

Behold, O God, our shield, and look upon the face of thine anointed, for a day in thy courts is better than a thousand, that is, better than a thousand anywhere else. I had rather be a doorkeeper in the house of my God than to dwell in the tents of wickedness, for the Lord God is the sun and shield. The Lord will give great and lowly, no good thing will he withhold from them that walk uprightly.

O Lord of hosts, blessed is the man that trusteth in thee. The second verse is particularly on my mind, that Pharaoh hath found a house, and that swallow a nest for herself, where she may lay her young, even thine altars, O Lord of hosts, my king and my God. Now, if you have your own bible before you, you will notice a little heading at the top of this psalm, a psalm for the sons of Korah.

These headings in the book of the psalms are different to the editorial notes which our translators have put in at the head of many of the chapters of the bible, because these headings in the psalms form part of the original Hebrew text, and therefore were put in by God himself through the inspired writers of these sacred psalms, and we may often learn from them, if you just stop and consider carefully what they tell us. For instance, several of the psalms expressing the exercise of souls would perhaps lose a great part of their value for us, if we didn't notice at the top a psalm of David when he fled from Absalom his God, his own son turned against him, and that accounts for the heart cry you see, and for many of these headings people loudly do it, and here we have a psalm for the sons of Korah. There are a number of psalms in this heading.

It naturally leads us to ask the question, who were the sons of Korah? And, when we turn back to the 26th and to the 16th chapter of Numbers, and then to those early chapters in 1 Chronicles made up almost entirely of genealogical tables, we learn that the sons of Korah were the direct lineal descendants of that Korah who, with Japhan and Nathiram, led in the apostasy in the wilderness. In number 16, we're told how Korah, Japhan and Nathiram, each led in a congregation, rose up against Moses and Aaron, and said he takes too much upon you, you sons of Levi, but all the Lord's people are holy. We might sense exactly what they meant, if it were not for the fact that over in the New Testament, in the epistle of Jude, where the Holy Spirit tells us of the apostasy of the last days, denying the Lord that bought men, denying the Lord that bought them, rejecting the testimony concerning atonement by his precious blood, we read they've gone in the way of Cain, and followed after the error of Salem for a ward, and perished in the vain saying of Korah.

The vain saying of Korah then was this, Korah and his associates said, we do not need a mediator, we do not need a high priest, we do not need an offering whereby to approach to God. All the Lord's people are holy, we're good enough as we are, we don't need anyone to go to God on our behalf, and that, you know, just answers to the apostasy that's so prevalent today. In so many places, people tell you we don't need a savior.

In fact, one of our old poets has written, I need no Christ to die for me. That is, he took the crown of being good enough for God as he was, and he did not need an atoning savior. Well, a way back there in the old testament times, God spoke through Moses to these apostates, and he called upon them for repentance, and when they refused to do so, he said, if these men die the death of all men, then you may know that the Lord has not sent me.

But, if the Lord create a new thing in the earth, and the old earth open her mouth, and swallow them up with all that appertain unto them, then you may know that God has spoken. And, Moses gave the order, come away from the tents of these wicked men, and everyone in Israel that fears God and recognizes

Moses as the divinely appointed mediator, and Aaron as the divinely appointed high priest, fled from the region of the tents of Korah, Jason, and Abiram, and went across to the tabernacle where Moses and Aaron stood. I fancy I can hear them singing, I'd rather sit at the doorstep in the courts of the Lord that dwells in the tents of wicked men.

And, when the separation was complete, and there was suddenly a great earthquake, the earth did open her mouth, and we are told that Korah and all his company went down alive into the pit. Well, if Korah and his company went down alive into the pit, how could there be any sons of Korah in after years whom these psalms might be dedicated? Well, the 26th of Numbers tells us a little more about it. It gives a second account of that incident, and there we have this word added, notwithstanding the children of Korah died not.

And, you know, that tells a wonderful story. It tells us that when the sons of Korah had to choose between fealty to their own father or faithfulness to God, they chose for God, and so they were saved from going down to the pit. And, you made a choice like that.

You know, the Lord Jesus said when he was healing earth, whose beloved father or mother more than he is not worthy of me. These sons of Korah had to decide would they go on with their father in his rebellion against God, or would they turn away from him and his truth to God? And, they chose the latter course. I've sometimes tried to visualize that scene.

I've imagined I could see those young men go up to their ancient father and say, father, don't fight against God. Don't rush upon the feet, thick waters of the Almighty. Whoever hardened himself against him and prospered, keep the voice of his servant while this time, and bow in repentance before God, and acknowledge your need of a priest and a mediator.

And, I think I could see that stern old man draw himself up and say, no, I'll never consent that I need a savior. I'll never acknowledge that I need a mediator. I'm just as good as Moses and Jerob or any of the rest of them.

I'm good enough for God just as I am. And, then the call came, come away from the tents of these wicked men. And, I think I see those sons of Korah say with tears in their eyes, well, father, if you won't yield to God, you'll have to listen.

We can't go on with you. We must keep the voice of his servant. And, so over the depths and to the deserts they went to the tabernacle of Jehovah.

And, then in a moment the earthquake came and Korah's all his company went down alive into the pit. But, the sons of Korah were saved. From the pit.

You know, whenever I come to one of these moms with this heading, it's on for the sons of Korah. I say to myself, I must give special attention to that. But, I'm one of the sons of Korah.

I too have been saved from going down to the pit. Have you? One time I was exposed to the judgment of God, but through it for the great, I was led to decide for Christ against the world. And, God in great aid made and delivered me from going down to the pit.

Oh, it's a great thing to make a decision like this. Have you ever come to the place in your life where you said, my old companion, fare you well? I will not go with you to hell. I mean with Jesus Christ as well.

Let me go. And, can you say tonight my heart is fixed? Eternal God takes a seat, and my unchanging choice is made. Christ for me.

He is my prophet, priest, and king, who did for me salvation bring. And, while I breath, he'll tell me. Christ for me.

Let others boast of the heaps of gold. Christ for me. His, my fortune never can be told.

Christ for me. Your gold will wait, and wear away. Your honor perish in a day.

My fortune never can decay. Christ for me. Have you made that decision? The Lord Jesus said to some people in his day on earth, you will not come to me that you might have life.

And, the invitation went out to everyone whosoever will, let it come. Have you heeded the invitation? Have you come to it? Have you made the great decision? Well, if so, these psalms ought to have special interest with you, because you belong to the sons of Korah. You're among those who'll be saved from going down to the pit.

The sons of Korah, the pussy, take quarters in the sanctuary of Jehovah. In later years, their descendants should take quarters as a part of the temple choir. And, you know, it's so suitable that it should be so.

The people who have been redeemed should be singing the praises of the Lord. What did we hear a few minutes ago? Redeemed, redeemed, oh, sing the joyful praise. Give praise, give praise and glory to his name, who gave his life, our souls to save, and purchased freedom for the slave.

It's a wonderful thing to be redeemed. It's a wonderful thing to be numbered among the sons of Korah, among those who have decided for Christ, who will never know what it is now to go down to the pit, who can pray with dear Paul Gearhart of the 17th century. There is no condemnation, there is no hell for me.

The torment and the fire my eyes shall never see. For me, there is no judgment. For me, there is, because the Lord who loves me shall heal me with his wing.

It's a wonderful thing to have made that decision. Well, these sons of Korah, you know, as they took their place in the temple choir, they could see something that a great multitude of people perhaps didn't notice nor every. The Jews never drove the little birds out of the sanctuary.

They allowed them to enter right into the courts of the tabernacle of the temple, and to build their nests there, even the sides of the altars. But they could be at home in God's house. When I was over in Jerusalem some years ago, my wife and daughter and I went up one day to the temple site where the temple of Solomon formerly stood, and now there stands the great mosque of the Dome of the Rock, in memory of the false prophet Muhammad.

And, as we were looking about that gorgeous building, our hearts pleased to think that a shrine to Muhammad stood in the ground where once sacrifice and offering went up to Jehovah. Suddenly, I said to my wife, listen, and we paused, and there, away above us, were little clusters of birds resting upon the arabesque ornament, and singing oh so sweetly. And, I said, why that's just like it used to be centuries ago when the temple of Jehovah was in this mosque.

The Jews never drove the little birds out. They had a lovely name for them. They called them God-pensioners.

They said they've come into God's house, and they're putting their trust in God, and so we mustn't disappoint them. We must never frighten them, and the result was the little birds would fly about, and even when the priests would officiate in the office, they'd not perfectly say that they're little from the ledge or had a nest there. They were at home in the house of God.

Two kinds of birds are mentioned here, and I think they have lessons for us. The sparrow has found her house. The sparrow, what shall we say of the sparrow? Well, I think we'll agree the sparrow is the most worthless of birds.

Some years ago, some press people out in New Zealand who had gone from Great Britain to the English parrots they were used to at home, and so they wrote back and asked the press to bring out a little cage of English parrots, and they left them loose in New Zealand, and you know today, they're a perfect pest. All over that country, they try to kill and slap them because of the damage they do to the crops and so on. The sparrow's so utterly worthless.

It's not a strong bird. It's like the heat of the melody. It's good for nothing.

Yet in our Lord's day, it was customary for young boys to go out and trap the sparrows and then dress them and put them in a sewer and put them out for sale, and the poorest of the people bought them and made a kind of a sparrow pie for their food, and the Lord Jesus referred to that when he said, are not two sparrows sold for a barley? And then he added on another occasion, are not five sparrows sold for two barleys? For one barley you get two. If you invest in two barleys, you get a real bargain. They'd throw in an extra sparrow with the rest.

Oh, Dr. James A. Brooks of St. Louis, a fighting champion for the fruitive years gone by, used to say, I think that's how I got saved. God must have been saving four others. He just threw me in for good measure.

Poor, worthless, good for nothing sparrows are not two sparrows sold for a barley. You know that the Jewish barley, the Palestine barley, is the most infinitesimal coin. It's smaller than an English barley, and an English barley is half of one of our American friends.

I remember when I was over in Southampton one time, somewhere or another it made this change. I was given three barleys, and you know, I tried to pass them all over England for weeks afterwards, and everywhere I offered them, they looked at me with contempt and said, we don't need those anymore. When I got up to Scotland, they were gladly getting them.

They know the value of money up there. I had no difficulty passing them to Scotland. But in England, they didn't want them at all.

They said, what's the matter? And you know, it just tells us the story, doesn't it? The utter worthlessness of the sparrow, and yet the sparrow had an end in broad sight. The sparrow found refuge in Jehovah's orphans. I tell you, dear brothers, that you and I, in broad sight, though worthless in ourselves, are of more value than many sparrows.

We're good for nothing in our sin, and yet God is great and has such a value upon us that he gave his own son to die to save us. But, if we say that the sparrow is the most worthless of birds, what can we say of the swallow? Did you ever see a swallow at rest? I think the swallow is the most restless of birds. It seems to be always on the wing.

One wonders how it can remain quiet long enough to hatch out the eggs. Just seems to be glitching in and out of the underneath of the barn, or wherever it has its nest, constantly. And it surely speaks of these poor wrecks of parts of ours before we know Christ.

Saint Augustine said centuries ago, O God, thou hast made us for thyself, and our souls will never get rest until they rest in thee. Yet, we are as worthless as the sparrow, and as restless as the swallow, and thank God there's a place of refuge for us. The sparrow has found a house in the swallow, and Edmund's up working a lathe and job.

God takes note, not only of the individual, but of the family connection with the individual. You'll remember that Paul's words to the jailer who cried, what must I do to be saved? And the answer came back, believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, the thousandth day in and nine out. It's been a wonderful thing to find refuge in your oldest house, and to seek to bring the children in too, and bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord.

Well, these punks of Chorus, they noticed a little first mention there in the altar in Pope's song, and you'll observe they used the plural, even sign altar, not just sign altar. You see, there were two altars in the temple at Jerusalem. There was the great altar, out in the court, the brazen altar, and that was the altar of sacrifice.

That was the altar to which the victims were brought, and slain, and their blood poured out, and the parts of their bodies burned in the flames to go up as a sacrifice in God's mercy of the cross work of the Lord Jesus Christ. When we think of a little bird finding refuge in that grave, and when the priests were officiated, for one afraid with a bird, if you could see them on the leg of the altar, building their head, and the fortunate of their age, while the slave of the altar was going up towards the feet of the poor sinner, finding refuge in a cross, and you found refuge there, and you say, hear the cross, a trembling soul, love and mercy thousands. There's a bright and morning star that is seen around you.

In the cross be my glory ever, till my raptured soul shall find rest beyond the river. The apostle Paul knew what it was that I read in the cross, and he explained, God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of the Lord Jesus Christ. And so, to the next in the brazen altar, speak of the rest that we find for a heart, for a guilty conscience, when we come to the Savior who died on the cross for our sins.

Then speak of peace with God through the blood of his cross, being justified by faith we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ. But then there was another altar. Inside the holy places, just before the veil, there was a golden altar.

No sacrifices were ever offered on that altar, but the blood of the sacrifice was taken from the brazen altar, and placed among the horns of the golden altar to identify the one with the other. And on that golden altar, Jesus prayed that his faith was rising up to God's control. David explains that when he says, let my prayer come before the ascent day, and the lifting up of my hands of the evening sacrifice.

The golden altar speaks of the work that our blessed Lord Jesus is carrying on in the glory. The brazen altar speaks of the work that he did on Calvary. The golden altar speaks of his intercessory work in the holiest up there in the presence of God, who is able to save to the uttermost all those who come unto God through him.

Seeing his ever-limitless and intercessory voice, he's constantly carrying his people up before God in prayer. The prayer of his faith is rising before the Father's throne continually. So, that golden altar speaks of the of the throne work of our blessed Lord.

The brazen altar says, Christ died for our sake. The golden altar says, Christ lives for our complete and eternal salvation. The golden altar says, Christ died in our place for our judgment.

The brazen altar says, the Christ who died for us lives to care for us. He's undertaking for us to take over. The brazen altar says, we'll keep withdrawing through the blood of the cross.

The golden altar says, be careful for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your request be made known unto God, and the peace of God which passeth all understandings shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus. You know, I think there are a lot of Christians who can trust the Lord for their eternal salvation, but who find difficulties trusting him for the rest next month. They can rest in him to carry them through to heaven, but somewhere or other their faith breaks down when they face the difficulties of getting along in this world.

Oh dear Christian, the one who died for you lives for you, and the word says, cast all your care upon him, for he cares for you. I think a lot of Christians are like a cartoon I saw many years ago. It was a double cartoon.

On the one picture it represented a man going along a country road, bent down beneath a heavy load, looked like a sack of potatoes or a sack of grains, something like that, and a farmer was driving by in an old-fashioned farm wagon in an empty seat in the back. He and his wife were up in the front seat, and he was threatening the man to get up in the wagon and take the seat that was vacant, and the second picture represented the man on that back seat in the farmer's wagon, and there he sat bent up down beneath the load that was deliberately chosen, and the farmer was representative looking around in surprise and saying, why don't you cast your burden in the wagon? And the man was saying, oh sir, it's good enough of you to give me a ride without making your horses pull my load too. I could carry that myself, and you know I think a lot of Christians are like that.

The blessed Lord is carrying them through the heavens, but they're carrying their own burden. They've never learned to unload their burden on the living Christ at God's right hand. They used to sing years ago, you've carried your burden, you've carried it along, oh bring it to Jesus, his loving and strong.

He'll take it away, and your sorrow shall cease. He'll send you rejoicing with his heavenly peace. I remember when I was a boy, I used to hear about a poor widow in the north of Scotland from which the place my father came, and this poor widow had been left with several little children.

Her husband had died in his maturity without having been able to make very much provision for his family, and he just as he was dying, he committed his wife to the Lord. He said, I can only leave this with you. He has said, leave thy father's children unto me.

I will preserve them alive unless thy widow trusts in me, and at first her faith was bright, and she got on with the Lord, committed all to him, but little by little she saw her small bundle of her husband's savings dwindling away, and finally she'd drawn out the last pound note from the bank, and then the day came when she'd spent the last penny from the purse, and now she'd come down to the last bit of meal in the barrel, like the poor widow in her life's estate, and she went to the barrel, you know, and she was stooping

over it, gathering up what little meal there was for the last penny, and then she didn't know what she was going to do. She had a little tin scraper, and as she bent over she was scraping it again, and she felt so utterly lonely, and forgot that the hot ball of tears began to fall down into the barrel, and her little three-year-old saw her, and his wee heart was moved with pity, and he came up, and he caught her by the dress skirts, and he said in his broad-socked way, Nether, Nether, what do you greet in the moose? Some of you didn't care to greet me, but that wee bit, what do you greet in the moose? And she said, just my lord, he has been scraping the bottom of the barrel, and she caught him up in her arms, and her tears came to tears of joy, and she said, oh lord, I thank you that out of a mouth of praise and suffering thou hast heard me this praise. I do believe thou hast heard me, thou hast seen me scraping the bottom of the barrel.

I will trump and not be afraid. You know, there was a sequel to this story, because her husband had built a house for one of the wealthiest men in the village, that when it came to a final settlement, there was a difference between them of a matter of fifty pounds or so, and the wealthy man refused to pay, though the other insisted it was coming to him, so he died without receiving. But you know, the day that the poor widow was scraping the bottom of the barrel, God began scraping his conscience, and he got thinking about the man that built the house and the widow and the little children, and he wondered how they were getting along, and he said to himself, I know I really owed him that much, I should have paid him.

It wasn't down in black and white, and so I was able to get out of it, but I've never been happy over it, and maybe the poor woman needs the money, and so he went down to the bank and he threw out the money, and he came to a little cottage and knocked on the door, and when she opened the door and saw who it was, she didn't want to receive it, because she thought he'd treated her husband so badly, but like a book agent, he put his foot in the door and she couldn't shut it off, and he explained the matter and why he had come, and as he handed her the money, she burst into tears and said, oh God did hear me scraping the bottom of the barrel, didn't he? And he said, what do you mean by that? And then she told him, well it's actually never a better friend than that man in all the days afterwards. Yes dear troubled one, God he is, he knows, he loves, he cares, nothing this truth can say, he gives the very best to those who read the choice they need. Have you found refuge in the author? Have you found refuge in the cross? You must have been there, you know, you never can know the tender loving care of the Lord Jesus as your shepherd, and as your intercessor, and advocate, and high priest, until you're first knowing that you're saved.

Oh if you've never come before, make your decision tonight, break away from the world that burned the Lord Jesus, and nailed him to a cross, and trusted for yourself, while he waits to be crucified.

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