

(How to Understand the KJV Bible) 21 Psalm 84

by Keith Simons

Psalm 84 is a song of longing and desire to be close to God, to experience his presence and blessings, and to trust in his kindness and provision.

Duration: 25:05

Scripture: Numbers 24:5, Psalm 37:4, Psalm 84, Isaiah 40:31, James 1:17

Topics: "KJV Bible", "Trust in God's Provision", "Longing for God's Presence"

Description

Keith Simons teaches on Psalm 84, emphasizing the deep longing for God's presence and the joy found in worshipping Him. He explains the significance of the tabernacles and the journey to Jerusalem, illustrating how even in difficult times, those who seek God find strength and blessings. The psalmist expresses a desire to be close to God, valuing even a single day in His courts over a thousand elsewhere. Simons highlights God's provision and protection for those who walk uprightly, concluding with the assurance that true happiness comes from trusting in the Lord.

Transcript

Welcome, my name is Keith Symons. I'm a Bible teacher from England and you're listening to the next in a series of talks on how to understand the King James Version of the Bible. Today we'll be looking at Psalm 84, going through it verse by verse and word for word, explaining the words and understanding their meaning.

So the title of this psalm reads, Psalm 84, to the chief musician upon Gittith, a psalm for the sons of Korah. The chief musician was the official who was in charge of the worship of God at the temple and before that the tabernacle, the house of God. Upon Gittith, this is a word taken from the Hebrew.

The King James Version translators haven't attempted to translate it into English, but its meaning is well known. It means the wine press. In order to produce wine, you take the grape.

In order to produce wine, you take the fruit called grapes and crush them. And this is associated with the Feast of Tabernacles, the great harvest festival when Israel's people would gather at the temple in Jerusalem where they would stay in tents or rather in shelters, in booths they call them today, to remember the time when Israel's people were passing through the desert on their way to Israel. And I mention that specifically because this does seem to be a psalm for that time of year.

It contains a lot of references to the journey to Jerusalem. It also has reference to tabernacles in the first verse, we'll soon see. A psalm for the sons of Korah.

Korah was someone who rebelled against God and against Moses and against Aaron and who died for his sins. But the sons of Korah lived and their families and future generations became important officials in God's house, the temple. And so this psalm was for or possibly by the sons of Korah, by this family with this notable history.

So verse one begins, How amiable are thy tabernacles, O Lord of hosts. How amiable, how lovable, how much I love your house, God. That's the meaning of it.

I love your tabernacles. Tabernacles are tents, as we've already said. And this could be referring to Israel's tents pitched around the tent, which was a house of God, the original house of God that Moses built.

Or it could be referring to the tents which were in the temple compound itself, not where the people were staying, but the tents which truly belonged to God. This verse calls to remembrance a very similar verse, Numbers 24, 5, the prophecy of Balaam. Balaam looked and he saw Israel's people in their camp at the time of Moses with their tents all around the tent, which was the house of God, the tabernacle.

And he said, Numbers 24, 5, How goodly are thy tents, O Jacob, and thy tabernacles, O Israel. How amiable are thy tabernacles, writes the author of this psalm, O Lord of hosts. He's speaking to the Lord, to God, of course, who is called by his title, the Lord of hosts.

Hosts means armies. Here is the Lord, the God who commands the armies of heaven, the angels. And he also commands Israel's people, who are or were his army on earth.

And so there they are in their tents, camped around God's tent, God's house in the centre. Verse 2, the writer of this psalm seems to be a long way away from the house of God, though. He's thinking about how lovely is the house of God, how wonderful it will be to be close to God.

Yet he's far from there. And for that reason, verse 2, My soul longeth, yea, even fainteth for the courts of the Lord. My soul, my inner life, longeth, it desires, yes, even faints.

To faint means to grow weak, so weak that you fall. But the Hebrew word is even more emphatic than that. It says, I'm consumed.

I'm totally taken up. I'm totally taken over. It seems the end of me because I so much desire to be at the courts of the Lord.

The courts means the courtyards, the open spaces around the temple. The people and even the priests didn't go in to the tabernacle or the temple, the building or the tent, which was the house of God. They served God in the yards outside it.

And those yards were called the courts. And that is where the author of our psalm was so eager to be. And it wasn't just his soul which desired this, but also my heart and my flesh crieth out for the living God.

So his heart, deep inside himself, the life inside him, and his body too, even his body, tempted as it so often was to do wrong things. Yet it's true desire, it's true desire was for God who always lives. And there were those who got so much nearer than just the courts, the yards, the temple.

Why, even the birds did so. Verse 3. Yea, 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. Okay, so the temple was a place where sacrifices were taking place.

The sacrifices were animals. That meant there was a lot of meat in the open air around the temple. And the various birds of prey and the scavengers, the big birds, the vultures and the eagles, would have tried to get that meat for themselves.

And so the priests had to be very careful because that meat belonged to God. And so they needed to chase away those big birds. But the little birds, they were welcome there.

The sparrows which gathered round and which were eating little flies, because there'd be a lot of flies where there was so much meat. And so the sparrows were welcome to come and take the flies. And they'd gather together in their family groups and the priests would be pleased with them there.

And the swallow, the swallow is a bird that flies high overhead. Again, it's taking insects for itself. You wouldn't normally see them come low, but here at the house of God, the swallow felt at home, so much at home that it could even build its nest, a nest for herself where she may lay her young.

Even nine altars, the altar was a place where the sacrifices were burned as a gift to God. Obviously, no bird is going to make a nest on an altar, especially as the fire on the altar at God's house burned constantly. So this is a word picture.

It's a word picture for how the writer of this psalm desired to be like those birds which were so close to being in the presence of God, which could go so near and no one would chase them away. That is what he wanted for himself, to be close to God, because God, O Lord of hosts, was my King and my God. And so now he, he proclaims a blessing.

Blessed are those, sorry, blessed are they that dwell in thy house. They will still, they will be still praising thee. Oh, it's true happiness to have a place, a permanent place in the house of God.

Not to be just a traveler who just goes out at these great festivals, but to constantly be praising God at his house. And with that he ends the first part of the psalm with a pause. And the word cello is a word of praise, but a word which expresses a pause in his psalm.

Verse 5, he continues. He continues describing the journey to go to the house of God, to worship God at this special feast. Blessed is the man whose strength is in thee, in God, in whose heart are the ways of them.

He feels so weak, so faint when he thinks about the house of God, verse 2. Yet he puts his strength in God. He looks to God for his strength and happy is that person, truly happy is that person. In his heart are the ways of them, the ways, the roads, the paths that lead to Jerusalem and to God's house.

That is the journey he truly wishes to take. And what a blessing is on those who go that journey. Why it is such a blessing that, verse 6, when they're passing through the valley of Baca, make it a well.

The rain also filleth the pools. Baca is a word that means weeping. It maybe doesn't refer to people weeping.

It may refer to trees that grew in a dry valley and which would weep sap from the tree, the juice from the tree coming out. But it's a picture of a dry and desperate valley. The rivers near Jerusalem do dry up in summer.

There's long dry periods in Israel and so rain is a great blessing. The Feast of Tabernacles comes at towards the end of the dry season in Israel. It's been dry for months and months.

The land is dry and yet these people are so happy, they're so much rejoicing in God that passing through this dry, dry valley, well they find a source of water. Maybe the water is a word picture for the joy in themselves. It can't be dried up by this dry valley.

The rain also comes. Rain is a special blessing at this time of year when it's so dry. There isn't much of it in Israel at this time of year.

It's a special blessing. The words that are translated in the King James Bible, the pools here, is rather strange in the translators thought to themselves, well what is the blessing for dry ground? Well for the pools to be full. But the rain brings a blessing with it.

Yes, God blesses these people who are on their journey to Jerusalem, to worship before God. Verse 7, something extraordinary happens on their journey. They started out so weak, didn't they? Verse 2, my soul longeth, yea even fainteth, but they go from strength to strength.

Normally on a journey, if you go a long walk, you get weaker until you can go no further. You go from weakness to weakness or from strength to weakness, but they go from strength to strength. They feel stronger and not weaker as they go this journey because they're going to pray before God at his tabernacle, his house, his holy place.

And that rejoicing in them, that joy, that true happiness that God gives them, gives them courage and strength so that they feel stronger and stronger until every one of them in Zion, in Jerusalem, appeareth before God. Until each one of them completes their journey to be there at the temple or the tabernacle, at the house of God, to pray to God. And so the writer of our psalm asks God to hear his prayer.

Verse 8, O Lord God of hosts, hear my prayer, give ear, in other words listen to me, O God of Jacob. And then he pauses again with the word Selah. Now we come to the prayer in verse 9. The author of our psalm has come with a very particular prayer to raise before God.

And it seems that God's people are in a difficult situation at this time because he asks God to act in power. Behold, verse 9, O God our shield, and look upon the face of thine anointed. The word behold means look.

He's asking God to look. He uses the word look, of course, in the second half of the verse. And he calls God, O God our shield.

It's God who defends his people. It's God who defends Israel from its enemies. The shield is the board that a soldier would hold up in war to defend himself and to protect himself.

Israel needs protection now. God's people need protection. Look upon the face of thine anointed.

The anointed is, in the Hebrew language, the word that gives us the word Messiah. And in the Greek language, it's the word that gives us the word Christ. It was the title of Israel's kings.

They were anointed and that was a ceremony that set them apart, pouring oil on them. It set them apart to serve God with their special duty of being the king of God's people and the leader of God's armies, the hosts or armies of Israel on the earth who served God or whose duty was to serve God. And so when the author of Psalm prays to God, look upon the face of thine anointed, it's saying we're in a desperate situation, but we plead that we have your king among us.

And probably the explanation of this is that this Psalm is at a time of great difficulty, maybe during the time of King David. Some have suggested it's a time when David had to escape from Jerusalem, to escape from Absalom, his son who wanted to kill him. And in that desperate situation, taken away from Jerusalem and taken away from the place where God had his house, this Psalm seems very appropriate.

And in the context of that, this prayer means God, it's you who defends us, who defends our nation. David is your king who you've appointed. Remember him, act because of him, act because of your promises to him and bring us back to Jerusalem where we so much desire to be.

Or if we take this as a prayer about the coming of Messiah, well then it might mean God we have so many troubles in Israel, so many needs. Please remember your promise to send the Messiah, to send your perfect king and rescue us from our troubles that we may worship before you and live as pleases you at your house, your temple, your tabernacle. Verse 10, for a day in my courts is better than a thousand.

In other words, a thousand days elsewhere is nothing. I long so much to be in the house of God or in the courtyards around the house of God. I want to be close to you God, even for a day.

That would be better than spending ever so many days away from God, away from your house, away from the place where you are present. I had rather be a doorkeeper in the house of my God than to dwell in the tents of wickedness. Properly a doorkeeper means the person responsible as a guard of the entrance to the temple.

But in this passage in the Hebrew and maybe in the understanding of the King James translators, the real meaning is I'd rather be the person who has a place just at the entrance, who can barely go into the house of God. I want to be as close as I can to God. So if I can only get as far as the entrance, that will be enough for me.

That will be better than to dwell in tents of wickedness. For all the luxury that wicked people may have in their homes. Their homes are temporary.

But the tabernacle, the tent of God, is a house of God. It's a permanent place. That is where I long to live.

Wicked people's wealth is temporary because they must die if they don't lose their money sooner. They must die and they must lose everything. But if I have a place at the entrance to the house of God, well, that is a place which remains.

That is something which continues to be valuable. On and on, verse 11. For the Lord God is a sun and shield.

He's a sun or like the sun, S-U-N. He gives us light and heat and warmth. He gives us what we need.

He is so kind and so gracious to us, providing for us day after day after day, as well as being our shield, our defender. The Lord will give grace and glory. Grace means his kindness.

Glory means what is truly good, what is truly valuable. The Lord will give grace and glory. He will provide for us what we truly need.

He'll provide for us more than that. He'll provide for us beautiful things, valuable things, what is truly beautiful and precious. He will provide for us because no good thing will he withhold from them that walk uprightly.

So the good things that we desire are good things because we're walking uprightly in the right way. The word walk means the way that we live. We live in the right way.

We desire what God considers to be truly good and God provides for us that which is truly good. And so for that reason, the author of our psalm can conclude, O Lord of hosts, blessed or happy is the man that trusteth in thee. You know, if that person is not truly happy yet, if they don't feel happy, they will be truly happy because God is doing these wonderful things for them.

God is changing around their situation. God is caring for them and providing for them. And just as that person truly desires to be close to God, God will give that to them because no good thing will he withhold, no good thing will he refuse from them that walk uprightly, that live in the way that pleases him.

I'd like you to write to me if you can, 333kjb at gmail.com. Please say that you've heard the talk on Psalm 84. 333kjb at gmail.com. Now here is a whole psalm. Psalm 84.

To the chief musician upon Gittith, a psalm for the sons of Korah. How amiable are thy tabernacles, O Lord of hosts. My soul longeth, yea, even fainteth for the courts of the Lord.

My heart and my flesh crieth out for the living God. Yea, the sparrow hath found, yea, 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, Selah. Blessed is the man whose strength is in thee, in whose heart are the ways of them, who, passing through the valley of Baca, make it a well. The rain also filleth the pools.

They go from strength to strength, every one of them in iron appeareth before God. O Lord, God of hosts, hear my prayer. Give ear, O God of Jacob, Selah.

Behold, O God our shield, and look upon the face of thine anointed. For a day in thy courts is better than a thousand. 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 a sun and shield. The Lord will give grace and glory. No good thing will he withhold from them that walk uprightly.

O Lord of hosts, blessed is the man that trusteth in thee.

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