



Threefold Blessings of Worshipping the Lord

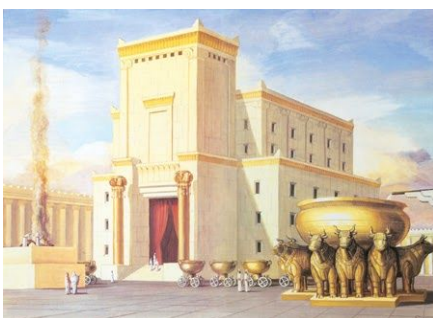
Psalm 84 | April 26, 2020
English Translation for Rev. Jeremiah Cheung

There are 12 verses in Psalm 84, with the word “Selah” appearing twice in these 12 verses. It appears the first time in the fourth verse and the second time in the eighth verse. “Selah” means to stop; therefore, Psalm 84 can be divided easily into three parts, with v.1-4 as the first part; v.5-8 as the second part; and v.9-12 as the third part. In each of these three parts, the word “blessed” appears:

- v.4 – “Blessed are those who dwell in your house.”
- v.5 – “Blessed are those whose strength is in you, whose hearts are set on pilgrimage.”
- v.12 – “Blessed is the one who trusts in you.”

These are the three blessings found in Psalm 84. For whom are these blessings? They are for those who worship the Lord. Psalm 84 is a song of Zion. The Israelites go to Jerusalem three times a year to worship the Lord. This psalm describes the three blessings that a person who truly worships God receives. The first is the blessing of dwelling in the house of the Lord. The second is the blessing of being on pilgrimage to Zion; the third is the blessing of trusting in the Lord.

I. The blessing of dwelling in the house the Lord



The first four verses tell us the psalmist’s longing for the temple. v.1-2: **“How lovely is your dwelling place, Lord Almighty! My soul yearns, even faints, for the courts of the Lord; my heart and my flesh cry out for the living God.”** As he wrote this psalm, the author was still at home but he longed to worship the Lord in His temple. It was as though his heart and his flesh were already at the temple exalting the Lord. ¹

We all know that our thoughts move faster than our actions. For example, you plan to vacation in Europe at the end of this year. You are physically not yet there, but your thoughts are already in France, in Italy, in Spain, in Rome, in the Netherlands. May we love the temple of the Lord with the same fervency! May we long for the joy of worshipping the Lord even while we are yet at home. Because of the enhanced community

¹ An artist’s interpretation of the first temple. By [Israel Truths](#) used under CC BY 4.0 License



quarantine, we cannot assemble in the Lord's sanctuary to worship Him together. Does your heart long to worship God in His temple now?

The psalmist says: "My soul yearns, even faints, for the courts of the Lord". The temple of the Lord was magnificent. When you saw it for the first time, you would say, "Wow!" But after seeing the same temple a thousand times, it won't feel special anymore because it is just an edifice. The psalmist longed for the courts of the Lord *because of the Lord!* It's just like Psalm 1, which talks about the man who "delights in the law of the Lord." By itself, there is nothing desirable about the Law; rather, it is because the author loves God that he loves the Law of God.

In Psalm 84, the writer uses different names to refer to God:

- **The Lord Almighty.** This refers to God's omnipotence, God's majesty, God's dignity.
- **The Living God.** This means that God is a living God and those who worship Him are also living people, because all those who come to Him are alive.
- **My King.** This refers to the relationship between God and the psalmist. The Lord is his king, his life is in God's sovereign hands.
- **My God.** This refers to the personal relationship between God and the psalmist. He is God, but more than that, He is *my* God, He has a personal relationship with me.

Church, the more you know Him, the more you long to worship Him!

Verse 3-4 says: "**Even the sparrow has found a home, and the swallow a nest for herself, where she may have her young—a place near your altar, Lord Almighty, my King and my God. Blessed are those who dwell in your house; they are ever praising you.**"² As the psalmist thought of the temple, the first thing he thought of was the altar in the temple. What is the altar? The altar is the place of sacrifice.



In the Old Testament, all worshipers of God must go through the altar first, because sinners cannot get to God directly; they can only worship the holy God through the sacrifice of the blood of cattle and sheep. The psalmist said, "Even the sparrow has found a home, and the swallow a nest for herself, where she may have her young—a place near your altar."

The psalmist mentions the sparrows and the swallows. These birds at the altar get skewered and barbecued. The psalmist used sparrows and swallows to describe people.

² Image of three sparrows in a nest, [royalty-free photo from PickPik](#)



In v.4: “Blessed are those who dwell in your house; they are ever praising you.” But why use sparrows and swallows? Both sparrows and swallows are insignificant and unnoticed. They are not as great as eagles or as beautiful as peacocks. The Lord Jesus said, “Are not two sparrows sold for a penny?” meaning they are very cheap, they aren’t worth much, no one values them. Swallows are migratory birds. They have no permanent dwellings and move around all their lives, but even they find a home at the altar of the Lord.

The altar represents the Cross. We may be lowly; it may be that no one pays attention to us and no one values us; we may have no status and no authority. But there is room for us at the Cross. There is room for us in the salvation that Jesus Christ offers. The altar welcomes us, the Lord Jesus welcomes us.

When the Lord was crucified on the cross, His hands were stretched out in a gesture of welcome – all sinners, the lowly and the humble are welcome. They can come to the cross to receive salvation. He said in the Gospel of John: “Whoever comes to me, I will never drive away.” “And I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all people to myself.”

The psalmist longed to worship the Lord while he was still at home. The more he thought of the temple, the more he yearned to go. We must not forget that according to the Law, the Israelites have three opportunities each year to go to the holy city and worship God in His temple, yet the psalmist said, “Blessed are those who dwell in your house; they are ever praising you.” He wanted to dwell in the temple all his life and worship God every day.

David said in Psalm 27:4, “One thing I ask from the Lord, this only do I seek: that I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life, to gaze on the beauty of the Lord and to seek him in his temple.” Those who love the Lord share one thing in common – they love the house of the Lord, they love God’s church. For them, to be able to live in the temple, to worship in the temple of the Lord is a blessing of a lifetime. Do you feel the same way?

II. The blessing of being on the pilgrimage to Zion

In v.1-4, the psalmist longed to see Zion and dwell in the house of the Lord. In v.5-8, we see that the psalmist has already left his hometown and is now on his way to the holy city of Jerusalem. He made a declaration in verse 5: “Blessed are those whose strength is in you, whose hearts are set on pilgrimage.”

What blessings do such people receive?



From v.5-8 we can see three transformations:

1. ***Turn a stirred heart to action***

Verse 5 says: “...hearts are set on pilgrimage” – this is the stirring of the heart. Verse 6: “as they pass through” – this is action. The stirred heart moves towards action. In Chinese, the term is 「感動」 – gǎndòng. The word “gǎn” means emotions. The word “dòng” means action. Sometimes our emotions are stirred but we fail to act and so nothing happens. Church, turn the stirrings of your heart into actions! When by faith we take the first step, the Lord will give us strength. Philippians 1:6 says, “being confident of this, that he who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus.” The Lord is the Alpha and Omega. When He moves us to do something, as long as we respond by obeying His stirring in our hearts, He will carry the work to completion.

2. ***Turn weeping into refreshing springs***

Verse 6 says, “**As they pass through the Valley of Baka, they make it a place of springs; the autumn rains also cover it with pools.**” On this pilgrimage, there will be some very difficult places; the psalmist calls it the Valley of Baka (tears). This is just like the valley of the shadow of death in Psalm 23, but God turns the valley into a spring with the blessing of the autumn rain. This part of the Middle East is a desert; rainwater is very precious and autumn rains come in November. After the rain comes the planting season. Before next year's harvest, the spring rain will fall again. If both these rains come, the planting season will yield a bumper harvest. So the Bible calls these the autumn rain and spring rain.

Church, when we are determined to worship God and live a godly life, there will surely be difficulties. Why? A man who truly belongs to the Lord is a man of integrity. And what is the enemy of integrity? Compromise. Compromise starts with small things. A small lie, a small choice, but soon your thoughts, your speech, your conduct have been compromised and finally, true integrity is now far from us. The mark of integrity is repentance. A man of integrity will often examine himself before God, he would at times weep for his own sin and filth. But such people are blessed, the Lord will turn their tears into refreshing springs.

3. ***Turn weakness into strength***

Verse 7 says, “**They go from strength to strength, till each appears before God in Zion.**” Zion is located 800 meters above the sea level. To reach Zion, it was necessary to travel up the mountains. Nowadays, it is so much more convenient to access it. Thousands of years ago, this



was not an easy road. As a person gradually ascends towards Zion, the stress on his body would increase and so he would have to exert more and more effort. He would need more strength as he climbs up step by step. The Lord gives strength upon strength so that we can go up to Zion and worship Him.

The grace that God provides can be categorized into two kinds: personal grace and corporate grace. Personal grace comes through personal devotions, worship, and prayer. Corporate grace comes when all the saints assemble together to worship the Lord. Paul said in Ephesians 3:18-19, "... may have power, together with all the Lord's holy people, to grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ, and to know this love that surpasses knowledge — that you may be filled to the measure of all the fullness of God."

The Lord wants to give more grace to His church. This is corporate grace, not personal grace. I don't know if you have had such an experience, but after worshipping with all the saints, you feel as if your whole being is energized and you find renewed strength to face the new challenges ahead. Meeting together renews our strength and as we are dismissed from our time together, we are turned from weak men and women into strong witnesses of the Lord.

III. The blessing of trusting in the Lord

In v.1-4, the psalmist expresses his longing to worship in the house of the Lord. In v.5-8, the psalmist turns the stirrings of his heart into actions as he embarks on his pilgrimage. In v. 9-12, the psalmist has arrived at the temple; he worships the Lord and is blessed. Then he leaves the temple with these blessings and becomes a channel of blessing to others. In these last four verses, we see how the psalmist specifically mentioned three things that had blessed him while he worshipped in the temple:

1. *The Lord hears and answers prayers*

Isaiah 56:7 says, **"these I will bring to my holy mountain and give them joy in my house of prayer. Their burnt offerings and sacrifices will be accepted on my altar; for my house will be called a house of prayer for all nations."** The Lord's temple is a house of prayer for all people. Wherever we sing praises in worship to the Lord, it is a house of worship. When we listen to the word of God, this is a house that preaches the Word of God. But did you notice how the Bible emphasizes prayer? This is a house of prayer.



What was the psalmist praying for? Verse 9 says, “Look on our shield, O God; look with favor on your anointed one.” He prayed for the anointed one. There are three kinds of people in the Bible who are anointed when they take office. They are kings, prophets, and priests. They are all servants of God. The psalmist prayed for them in the temple. Paul also taught us in 1 Timothy 2 that we should pray for those who are in authority. Rather than just criticizing them, we must pray for them, because there is no authority that does not come from God. May the church be filled with the voice of prayer. May this place be a temple of prayer. May the Lord hear and answer the prayers we lift up to Him.

2. *The Lord changed the psalmist's values*

Verse 10 says, “**I would rather be a doorkeeper in the house of my God than dwell in the tents of the wicked.**” This is a change in the psalmist's values. A day in the courts of the Lord is better than a thousand days elsewhere. What does this statement tell us? Before we knew the Lord, we may not like going to church. We'd prefer to play, eat, or have fun than go to church. But after we come to believe in the Lord, we begin to like going to church. And as you know God more and love God more, the church will become the place where you are most eager to go. The psalmist said that one day in the temple of the Lord is better than a thousand days elsewhere. A thousand days is three years! How can a day be better than three years? Because of love!

Remember the story of Jacob? He loved Rachel deeply and, for him, seven years of service to Rachel's father were like only a few days if it meant that he could marry her. The psalmist loved God, so time passed quickly when he worshipped in the temple. He said he would rather live in the Lord's courts for a day rather than a thousand days elsewhere. “I would rather be a doorkeeper at the house of my God than dwell in the tents of the wicked.”

The author of Psalm 84 is a descendant of Korah. When Solomon built the temple, the descendants of Korah were appointed to serve in the temple. They were the choirs, the doorkeepers of the temple, and the ushers. To explain in contemporary terms, they would rather sing and worship God in the church than be performers and entertainers on the stages of the world or be CEOs of secular companies. This statement reflects a change in what they value.

The story of Whitney Houston is just the opposite. She grew up in church, having joined the church at the age of 11. She became a worship leader. Her music ministry became more and more successful. She won more than 400 awards, but she slowly left God behind. In the end, she left this world at the young age of 48. That was how her life ended. Consider your own life: are you living in a way that adds eternal value to your life?



3. *The Lord protected the psalmist with his glory*

Verse 11 says, “For the Lord God is a sun and shield; the Lord bestows favor and honor; no good thing does He withhold from those whose walk is blameless.” The phrase “the Lord is a sun” symbolizes direct blessings. As Jesus said: “He causes his sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous.” This is grace given by God. The phrase “the Lord is a shield” refers to indirect blessings. It is just like how not being able to leave our homes now is also a form of protection for us. It is when we are in danger that we need the shield of the Lord to protect us. The Lord is our sun and shield. He does not withhold any good from us who live with integrity, therefore the psalmist declared, “Blessed are those who trust in you.”

A person who truly worships God is blessed threefold: First, they can dwell in the house of the Lord. This is our spiritual home. Although like sparrows and migratory swallows, we may not be valued by this world, the temple of the Lord is our home. Second, they are on a pilgrimage to Zion. Zion is the pilgrim’s road, this is the journey of life. It is not an easy road, but with His power, we turn the Valley of Tears into refreshing springs. Third, in the Lord’s temple, they can enjoy the glory that God gives. In His family, they can enjoy the goodness, grace and glory of God.

Church, may you experience the three-fold blessings of worshipping the Lord.