

## My favourite psalm — Psalm 84

The earth is a big place; Jerusalem is a long way from most people. Even if a temple stood on the holy mount, most of us would probably only get to visit it once in our lifetime — if we were lucky. Though Psalm 84 was written by someone, probably a priest, who had spent many hours in the temple, he never tired of returning. Cut off from the temple for a period, he recounts his joy upon returning to it, and his feelings en route. His words encapsulate the yearning believers should feel if they had opportunity to visit. More broadly, how they should feel in their Christian pilgrimage.

*1 How lovely is Your tabernacle, O LORD of hosts! 2 My soul longs, yes, even faints for the courts of the LORD; my heart and my flesh cry out for the living God.*

When cut off from its intense spiritual power, the writer felt overcome with a yearning to return to earth's most peaceful place, a place filled with the powerful sense of God's presence.

*3 Even the sparrow has found a home, and the swallow a nest for herself, where she may lay her young — even Your altars, O LORD of hosts, my King and my God.*

In his distress he felt jealous of the birds that built their nests in the temple's courts. Their very presence, undisturbed by the priests, attested to the tranquility and security found there.

*4 Blessed are those who dwell in Your house; they will still be praising You. Selah*

As he began his return, he felt overjoyed at the remembrance of serving as a temple official, and could hardly wait to reach his goal and serve again side by side with like-minded brethren. Not all priests were corrupt; most, in fact, counted it a blessing to serve in God's house.

*5 Blessed is the man whose strength is in You, whose heart is set on pilgrimage.*

He had learnt the lesson of complete dependence on God and the peace it brought. He praised all who had done the same and who, like himself, wanted nothing more for themselves than to stand in God's only dwelling place on earth and the opportunity to thank and praise Him in the company of other believers.

*6 As they pass through the Valley of Baca, they make it a spring; the rain also covers it with pools.*

As these people journey towards their destination, they must pass through some barren regions. Lifted at the prospect of reaching their goal, such deserts take on the appearance of lush, verdant oases. Believers of all ages are pilgrims on a life-long journey through spiritual wastelands. The prospect of dwelling in God's future temple with Jesus Christ will make this pilgrimage endurable.

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

In their mind's eye, these pilgrims imagine themselves standing in God's presence. This vision not only enables them to withstand the vicissitudes of the journey, but increases their hope and determination along the way. Through faith Christians today believe that Christ lives in them; let them now pray for the insight to envisage the time when they will bask in Christ's visible, glorious presence in His kingdom temple, and will have daily opportunity to commune with Him on a personal level.

*8 O LORD God of hosts, hear my prayer; give ear, O God of Jacob! Selah. 9 O God, behold our shield, and look upon the face of Your anointed.*

Perhaps the psalmist is cut off because the country has been thrown into confusion through some disaster having befallen the anointed Davidic king, the shield. Hasten the king's return so that temple service may be restored. Believers understand that they will be given authority in the temple when Jesus, the ultimate Davidic sovereign, returns with the place He has prepared for them.

*10 For a day in Your courts is better than a thousand. I would rather be a doorkeeper in the house of my God than dwell in the tents of wickedness.*

My favorite verse. Living for years in the lap of earthly luxury, basking in the best that ill-gotten wealth can provide, is contemptible compared with a single day serving in God's courts in the presence of Jesus Christ — even in the most menial way possible.

*11 For the LORD God is a sun and shield; the LORD will give grace and glory; no good thing will He withhold from those who walk uprightly.*

Nothing can compare with the pleasure of standing at Christ's right hand in His kingdom.

*12 O LORD of hosts, blessed is the man who trusts in You!*

Like David, He will dwell in the house of the LORD forever.