

# Psalms, Hymns, and Spiritual Songs: The Master Musician's Melodies

Bereans Sunday School  
Placerita Baptist Church  
2006

by  
William D. Barrick, Th.D.  
Professor of OT, The Master's Seminary



## Psalm 84 — A Day in the LORD's House

### 1.0 Introducing Psalm 84

- Psalm 84 is the first of four Korahite psalms in Book 3 of the Psalter (Psalms 84, 85, 87, 88). Psalms 42 and 44–49 comprise the seven-psalm Korahite collection in Book 2.
- “It is a psalm of people who were present in the temple, who served in God’s house, and who are expressing here how intensely their very souls yearned and even fainted for God.”—James Montgomery Boice, *Psalms*, 3 vols. (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 1996), 2:690.

### 2.0 Reading Psalm 84 (NAU)

**84:1** A Psalm of the sons of Korah.

How lovely are Your dwelling places, O LORD of hosts!

**84:2** My soul longed and even yearned for the courts of the LORD;  
My heart and my flesh sing for joy to the living God.

**84:3** The bird also has found a house,  
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.

**84:4** **How blessed are those** who dwell in Your house!  
They are ever praising You. **Selah.**

**84:5** **How blessed is the man** whose strength is in You,  
In whose heart are the highways to Zion!

**84:6** Passing through the valley of Baca they make it a spring;  
The early rain also covers it with blessings.

**84:7** They go from strength to strength,  
*Every one of them* appears before God in Zion.

- 84:8** O LORD God of hosts,  
                  hear my prayer;  
                  Give ear,  
O God of Jacob!
- Selah.**
- 84:9** Behold our shield, O God,  
And look upon the face of Your anointed.
- 84:10** For a day in Your courts is better than a thousand *outside*.  
I would rather stand at the threshold of the house of my God  
Than dwell in the tents of wickedness.
- 84:11** For the LORD God is a sun and shield;  
The LORD gives grace and glory;  
No good thing does He withhold from those who walk uprightly.
- 84:12** O LORD of hosts,  
**How blessed is the man** who trusts in You!
- For the choir director.

### 3.0 Understanding Psalm 84

#### 3.1 Outline

- I. Participants in the House (vv. 1-4)
- II. Pilgrims on the Highways (vv. 5-8)
- III. Petitioners at Heart (vv. 9-12)



#### 3.2 Notes

- **v. 1** “How lovely”
  - “Lovely” is perhaps better translated “beloved” or “dearly beloved” (see Isaiah 5:1, “well-beloved”; compare Psalms 60:5; 108:6; 127:2).
  - The word is related to the name Jedidiah given to Solomon (2 Samuel 12:25) and to the literary title of Psalm 45 (“A Song of Love”).
- **v. 2** “My soul longed and even yearned for”
  - Compare Psalms 27:4; 42:1-2; 63:1-2; 122:1; 137:5-6.
- **v. 2** “the living God”
  - This divine title is also found in Psalm 42:2 (another Korahite psalm).
  - Other vocabulary shared by Korahite psalms include the following:
    - ✓ “appear before God” (42:2; 84:7)
    - ✓ “(Your) tabernacles” (43:3; 84:1; 87:2)
    - ✓ “LORD of hosts” (46:7, 11; 48:8; 84:1, 3, 12)—see notes on 24:10.
- **vv. 4, 5, 12** “How blessed”
  - Three beatitudes punctuate Psalm 84.
    - ✓ Verse 4 speaks of those serving in the Temple.
    - ✓ Verse 5 addresses those on pilgrimage to the Temple.

- ✓ Verse 12 is for those too far from the Temple to come to it, but who trust in the Lord.
- No other psalm contains three beatitudes.
- **v. 6** “the valley of Baca”
  - No known valley bears this name in biblical and extrabiblical records.
  - Traditionally, it has been understood as “the valley of weeping,” but “Baca” is spelled differently in the Hebrew. “Baca” does sound like the word for “weeping.”
  - “Baca” might refer to a kind of tree or to a parched place.
- **vv. 8, 11** Chiasms
  - Verse 8’s chiasm is easily represented in the translation format above.
  - Verse 11’s chiasm is as follows:
    - A For the LORD God is
    - B a sun and shield
    - B’ grace and glory
    - A’ The LORD gives
  - It is possible that the central elements could be an extension of the chiasm rather than simple parallel descriptions of God and His gifts:
    - B a sun
    - C shield
    - C’ grace
    - B’ glory
- **v. 9** “Behold our shield”
  - The parallel (“anointed”) indicates that this is a reference to the king.
  - The Lord is the shield in verse 11.
- **v. 10** “stand at the threshold”
  - Some translations employ “be a doorkeeper” (KJV, NKJV, RSV, NRSV, NIV, ESV).
  - In the Western mindset a doorkeeper has a lowly position, fitting what the context seems to require. However, in the biblical mindset a Temple doorkeeper was an exalted position.
  - Doorkeeper “seems to have been a major office with dignity and authority: note Eli in his seat by the doorpost of the temple at Shiloh in 1 Sam 1:9; see also 2 Kgs 12:9; 22:4; 25:18; Jer 35:4; 52:24; Esth 2:21; 6:2; 1 Chr 9:19, 22; 2 Chr 23:4.”—Marvin E. Tate, *Psalms 51–100*, Word Biblical Commentary (Dallas, TX: Word Books, 1990), 354.
  - “Stand at the threshold” implies the status of a beggar or petitioner.
- **v. 11** “No good thing does He withhold”
  - Compare Romans 8:28.



## 4.0 Singing Psalm 84

### Lord of the Worlds Above Tune: "Rejoice, the Lord Is King"



\*Lord of the worlds above, how pleasant and how fair  
The dwellings of Thy love, Thine earthly temples are!  
To Thine abode, my heart aspires with warm desires  
To see my God.

\*The sparrow for her young with pleasure seeks a nest,  
And wand'ring swallows long to find their wonted rest:  
My spirit faints with equal zeal to rise and dwell  
Among thy saints.

O happy souls that pray where God appoints to hear!  
O happy men that pay their constant service there!  
They praise Thee still; and happy they that love the way  
To Zion's hill.

They go from strength to strength, through this dark vale of tears,  
Till each arrives at length, till each in heaven appears;  
O glorious seat, when God, our King, shall thither bring  
Our willing feet!

\*To spend one sacred day where God and saints abide,  
Affords diviner joy than thousand days beside:  
Where God resorts, I love it more to keep the door  
Than shine in courts.

God is our Sun and Shield, our Light and our Defense;  
With gifts His hands are filled; we draw our blessings thence.  
He shall bestow on Jacob's race peculiar grace  
And glory too.

\*The Lord his people loves; His hand no good withholds  
From those his heart approves, From pure and pious souls:  
Thrice happy he, O God of hosts, whose spirit trusts  
Alone in Thee.

— Isaac Watts

### Better Is One Day

How lovely is Your dwelling place, Oh Lord Almighty,  
For my soul longs and even faints for You;  
For here my heart is satisfied within Your presence,  
I sing beneath the shadow of Your wings.

- [2x] Better is one day in Your courts,  
Better is one day in Your house,  
Better is one day in Your courts,  
Than thousands elsewhere.
- [2x] One thing I ask, and I would seek, to see Your beauty.  
To find You in the place Your glory dwells.
- [2x] Better is one day in Your courts,  
Better is one day in Your house,  
Better is one day in Your courts,  
Than thousands elsewhere.

My heart and flesh cry out for You, the Living God;  
Your Spirit's water for my soul — I've tasted, and I've seen;  
Come once again to me, I will draw near to You,  
I will draw near to You, to You —

- [2x] Better is one day in Your courts,  
Better is one day in Your house,  
Better is one day in Your courts,  
Than thousands elsewhere.

— Matt Redman

## 5.0 Praying Psalm 84



- O Lord, how I long to be in Your presence. [vv. 1-2]
- Bless those who love to gather in Your assembly. [v. 4]
- Father, give me strength to join with others in Your praise. [vv. 5-7]
- Help me avoid “the tents of wickedness.” [v. 10]
- Teach me to trust You. [v. 12]
- 

## 6.0 Applying Psalm 84

- Our longing for the Lord's house should be a desire for God Himself.
- If we are consumed with longing for the living God, we will go “from strength to strength,” rather than becoming discouraged. (Compare Isaiah 40:31.)
- “Let us consider how to stimulate one another to love and good deeds, not forsaking our own assembling together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging *one another*; and all the more as you see the day drawing near” (Hebrews 10:24-25).