

LESSON 8

OCTOBER 24, 2021

UNIT II. CALLED TO PRAISE GOD

“OUR HOUSE”

DEVOTIONAL READING: 2 Chronicles 29:25-30

BACKGROUND SCRIPTURE: Psalm 84

PRINT PASSAGE: Psalm 84:1-12

KEY VERSE

Blessed are they that dwell in thy house: they will be still praising thee. (Psalm 84:4, KJV)

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Blessed are those who dwell in your house; they are ever praising you. (Psalm 84:4, NIV)

LESSON AIMS

As a result of experiencing this lesson, you should be able to do these things:

- Discover why the psalmist expresses joy in worship.
- Feel the joy of worship by proclaiming the living presence of God throughout creation.
- Create a visual or auditory expression of how you appreciate worshipping God.

KEY TERMS

Behold (verse 9)—Hebrew: *raah* (raw-aw’): to see; “look” (NIV).

Blessed (verse 4)—Hebrew: *esher* (eh’-sher): happiness; blessedness.

Longs (verse 2)—Hebrew: *kasaph* (kaw-saf’): to have desire; “longeth” (KJV); “yearns” (NIV).

Prayer (verse 8)—Hebrew: *tephillah* (tef-il-law’): communication or petition to God.

Strength (verse 5)—Hebrew: *oz* (oze): power; might.

Strength (verse 7)—Hebrew: *chayil* (khah’-yil): valor; courage; bravery.

INTRODUCTION

In March 2019, in the early weeks of the coronavirus pandemic, states issued their first stay-at-home orders and for the first time ever, thousands of churches across the nation shut and locked their doors for months. In an abundance of caution, as the deadly virus continued to sweep through choirs and congregations and communities, churches adopted new approaches to Sunday worship, Bible study, and meetings. Many church celebrations and activities were cancelled. Worshippers were forced to gather in the parking lot or to acquaint themselves with technology and social-media platforms like Facebook Live, YouTube, and Zoom. The blessing is that the ministry of the Word was able to continue. We were absent from the sanctuary, but not blocked from the privilege of hearing a word from the Lord.

By the end of 2020, however, millions of churchgoers who had not missed church in more than a decade had been absent from the sanctuary for more than six months, while many, fearing infection, vowed to never return to the sanctuary. Many were forced to forego baptisms, cancel church wedding plans, or bury their loved ones at graveside services without the solace of a funeral gathering to honor the deceased. This swift, abrupt change in the familiar routines of church life left millions of people wrestling with a wide range of emotions, including anger, grief, frustration, despair, loneliness, and a great sense of spiritual and social disconnection. It is the one thing we

all took for granted—being at church, worshipping God in crowded sanctuaries, shaking hands, embracing each other, singing with the choir, sharing a pew, passing each other in the aisles and hallways, and feeling the glorious presence of God in the company of the saints.

THE BIBLICAL CONTEXT

Psalm 84 is one of eleven psalms (42; 44–49; 84; 85; 87; 88) credited to the Korahites, a family of temple musicians descended from Levi, a son of Jacob. These songs reflect a hunger to be closer to God and a strong repentance for personal and corporate wrongdoings. Korah, the ancestor of these musicians, rebelled against Moses along with 249 co-conspirators. All were punished for their rebellion when God sent fire from heaven to consume them (see Numbers 16:1–40); yet, God spared Korah’s descendants (see 26:11). They remained faithful to God, serving Him as musicians in the temple. These songs and similar songs of praise (Psalms 120–134, known as “Songs of Ascent”) show and encourage a unified praise that not only acknowledges the “joy of worship” but also boldly proclaims to the world that “this is our house of our God.”

ANALYSIS OF THE BIBLICAL TEXT

BLESSED TO WORSHIP IN THE HOUSE OF THE LORD (PSALM 84:1-4)

KJV

HOW AMIABLE are thy tabernacles, O LORD of hosts!

2 My soul *longeth*, yea, even fainteth for the courts of the LORD: my heart and my flesh crieth out for the living God.

3 Yea, the sparrow hath found an 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.

4 *Blessed* are they that dwell in thy house: they will be still praising thee. Selah.

NIV

HOW LOVELY is your dwelling place, LORD Almighty!

2 My soul *yearns*, even faints, for the courts of the LORD; my heart and my flesh cry out for the living God.

3 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.

4 *Blessed* are those who dwell in your house; they are ever praising you.

The psalmist shares his tremendous desire and longing for God’s presence. The psalm opens by declaring the blessedness of the sanctuary (**verse 1**). This blessedness translated in the King James Version as “amiable” refers to more than décor, furnishings, and aesthetics. It is the spiritual atmosphere of the place where God’s presence abides that endears the psalmist to the sanctuary. One might compare it to the warm feeling of returning home to visit family members after a lengthy absence. Because the sanctuary of God is so precious to the writer, he yearns for it, almost to the point of fainting (**verse 2**). The passion he feels is not just hype or some superficial fascination but a deep, heartfelt longing that compels him to cry out to “the living God” (**verse 2**). The psalmist makes another observation: so welcoming is God’s house that even the smallest creature, a sparrow, may find shelter and safety near the Lord’s altar to nest and feed her young (**verse 3**). There is perhaps no greater blessing of joy and fulfillment than to find rest and habitation in the place where God’s voice is heard, His will revealed, and His presence felt. Brick and mortar

do not inspire passion or praise. Like the sparrow, the psalmist longed to be near the altar of God, the place where humanity and divinity meet. Those who find themselves near the altar have a wonderful reason to praise the Lord (**verse 4**).

WHAT DO YOU THINK?

Where do you yearn to be? What are the places and spaces which hold enough meaning and special memories to move you deeply? What thoughts or feeling do you experience in the house of God?

BLESSED TO WORSHIP IN THE POWER OF THE LORD (PSALM 84:5-8)

KJV

5 Blessed is the man whose *strength* is in thee; in whose heart are the ways of them.

6 Who passing through the valley of Baca make it a well; the rain also filleth the pools.

7 They go from *strength* to strength, every one of them in Zion appeareth before God.

8 O LORD God of hosts, hear my *prayer*: give ear, O God of Jacob. Selah.

NIV

5 Blessed are those whose *strength* is in you, whose hearts are set on pilgrimage.

6 As they pass through the Valley of Baka, they make it a place of springs; the autumn rains also cover it with pools.

7 They go from *strength* to strength, till each appears before God in Zion.

8 Hear my *prayer*, LORD God Almighty; listen to me, God of Jacob.

The psalmist notes the blessing of finding one's strength in the Lord. Those who seek for purpose and strength in vain, superficial pursuits will never find them. Those who find their strength in God see themselves as pilgrims, or travelers (**verse 5**). They seek no strength or permanence in temporary or material attachments, considering themselves only as travelers through this world, seeking to find real strength in eternity. True pilgrims find springs of joy in valleys of sorrow (**verse 6**). Instead of dragging through life's uphill struggles, low valleys, and dry deserts in weakness, pilgrims go from one strong position to another (**verse 7**). God's strength sustains their strength, helping them to endure (**verse 7**). God has proven that He not only cares about us, but also sees us and pays attention to the smallest details of our lives. He is the "LORD God Almighty" (**verse 8**, NIV), who ushers us to the place of peace that is beyond our understanding (see Philippians 4:7). Hear us, Lord God Almighty—we need Your strength.

WHAT DO YOU THINK?

Share an experience whereby worshipping God gave you the needed strength to endure either new terrain or troubled terrain.

BLESSED TO WORSHIP IN THE PRESENCE OF THE LORD (PSALM 84:9-12)

KJV

9 *Behold*, O God our shield, and look upon the face of thine anointed.

10 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.

11 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.

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

NIV

9 Look on our shield, O God; look with favor on your anointed one.

10 Better is one day in your courts than a thousand elsewhere; I would rather be a doorkeeper in the house of my God than dwell in the tents of the wicked.

11 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.

12 LORD Almighty, blessed is the one who trusts in you.

The psalmist begins this section by asking God for His favor, which would provide divine protection (**verse 9**). Returning to the subject of his longing for God's house, the psalmist notes that even a little time there was better spent than extended time anywhere else (**verse 10a**). Given the choice, the psalmist would choose to serve humbly in God's house (as a doorkeeper) rather than live a luxurious life in wicked places (**verse 10b**). Such affection for God's house calls to mind the old hymn by Fannie Crosby, "Take the World, but Give Me Jesus," or Paul's statement in Philippians 3:8: "I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord: for whom I have suffered the loss of all things."

In closing, the psalmist recounts the blessings that come to those who long for God's house. To them, God gives good things like "favor and honor" (**verse 11**, NIV). They enjoy God as the source of blessing (sun) and protection (shield). They will receive every good thing the Lord has for them (**verse 11**). He is not awed by brick and mortar as much as by the easy privilege resting in the radiance of God's sun, the protection of God's shield, the enjoyment of God's favor and honor, along with the "good things" God grants to those who walk faithfully before Him (**verse 11**). God is a shield who covers us under the wings of His own presence. May these sacred writings stir in us a deeper longing for God's presence, and greater awareness of the blessing of trusting in the Lord (**verse 12**).

WHAT DO YOU THINK?

Share some ways that worshipping in the sanctuary has helped you to remain connected to God. Use your own testimony to invite others to join your Christian community.

A CLOSING THOUGHT

The personal desire for God's presence must come from the heart rather than guilt or habit. God satisfies and fills those who "hunger and thirst" for Him (Matthew 5:6). In this world, people have pursued every craving and longing under the sun and still found themselves empty and unfulfilled. The yearning for God is the pursuit that does not disappoint. If you have come to know the joy and satisfaction of God's presence, why not invite someone to join you on the sweet journey of life with God?

YOUR LIFE

Analyze your worship routines. In addition to Sundays, what times do you spend at church, seeking to serve? When you serve, in which ways do you sense or experience God's presence?

YOUR WORLD!

Analyze your church's demographics. What is the makeup (age, gender, etc.)? Where do the people live? With a small group, analyze the data and seek to engage people in the gaps.

CLOSING PRAYER

Lord, remind us that this church is not "ours." No matter whose name is on the deed, the cornerstone, or the Web site, this church belongs to You and Your people. Use us to draw others to worship in Your house. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

CONCLUSION

(Preparing for Next Week's Lesson)

While reading the Background Scripture, consider this thought: "How much do you long to praise Him?"

HOME DAILY BIBLE READINGS

PRAISE GOD WITH MUSIC

(October 25-31, 2021)

MONDAY, October 25: "A Song of Praise Is Fitting" (Psalm 147:1-7)

TUESDAY, October 26: "David's Music Soothes Saul" (1 Samuel 16:14-23)

WEDNESDAY, October 27: "Paul and Silas Sing in Prison" (Acts 16:23-26)

THURSDAY, October 28: "Praise the Name of the Lord" (Psalm 148)

FRIDAY, October 29: "Psalms, Hymns, and Spiritual Songs" (Colossians 3:12-17)

SATURDAY, October 30: "Making Melody to God" (Psalm 149)

SUNDAY, October 31: "Praise God with Musical Instruments" (Psalm 150)