

Psalm 84

The psalmist uses the outward, physical journey of pilgrimage to describe the inner journey of the heart.

Blessing comes from dwelling where God dwells

Does the psalmist just want to experience the splendor of the Temple? No. His longing goes much deeper than that. He loves the house because of whose house it is. It's God who his soul is thirsty for, and he wants to be where God is.

He can't stay silent about it. His whole body sings for joy. Why? Because he knows that at the altars his sin has been taken away: what could separate him from God has been removed. That is reason for joy!

We don't have a temple or an altar, but in Christ God came to dwell with us, and his cross became an altar where our sin was dealt with. When we realize that God has done everything to bring us to himself, we too will know real joy!

The psalmist knew that ultimately, the longing of the human heart, to be known and accepted and loved, is only ever satisfied by God.

How can we know and experience that in our modern, fast-paced world? We must take time to dwell, to linger where God is; to think and ponder and meditate on all that God has done for us in Jesus.

Blessing comes through the Valley of Tears

In v5 the psalmist says that the real highways of pilgrimage are in the heart. The problem is that life can leave our hearts hurt by sorrow and pain. If we handle the sorrows of life wrongly they can lead us away from God not to him.

But the psalmist says in v6 that the pilgrims make the Valley of Baca a place of springs. Baca means weeping. It's a picture of a dry desert valley, those times in our lives when there is more weeping than joy, and life is hard and barren. But it's in the valley of weeping that new life springs up.

Rather than turn back in the valley, we are to look to God for our strength. If we try and survive in our own strength, through anxiety, worry or bitterness, our strength will be depleted. But as we look to God, our strength will increase.

Blessing comes with trusting God

The writer knows that God is of infinitely greater value than anything the world can offer. He would rather take the lowest position where God is, than the highest anywhere else. And he can say that because he knows that God is both a sun and a shield: the God who brings the light and warmth of his embrace, and the protection and security we are looking for.

And in Jesus God has withheld nothing good from us. He has done everything we needed. Blessing comes by putting our trust in this God.