

The Greatest Story (Part 23):

Our Desire for God's Dwelling

Psalm 84

Memory Verses: Psalm 84:10

MANUSCRIPT

Introduction (Me, We, & the Struggle)

For the past two weeks we've been looking at the Psalms of David. Two weeks ago we saw David's desire for the Word of God and how he saw the Word as a means to root us in the ways of God in **Psalm 1**. Then last week we saw in **Psalm 23** how God is our Great Shepherd who provides for us and protects us and that in him there is no more want and no more fear and how in his oil overflowing from our cups we prosper spiritually. It's funny but I want you to turn back over to the **23 Psalm** and I want you to once again look at how it ends. **Verse 6 says, and I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever.**

Now I want you to turn over to our Psalm for today **Psalm 84** and I want you to notice how it begins. **How lovely is your dwelling place.** There is something about the dwelling place of God that the Psalms wants us to notice.

What is so special about the 84th Psalm that I would have to preach on it? I mean if out of all of the Psalms I can only preach on three in this series... why pick this one? Well, as you will notice at the top of the Psalm it says that it is a Psalm of the Sons of Korah.

So time for a history lesson. The sons of Korah are the descendants of the Kohathites who were responsible for the moving of the temple artifacts and the ark of the covenant during the days of the tabernacle. Korah was the grandson of Kohath and he rebelled against Moses and God and was swallowed up in an earthquake. His sons who did not follow in his rebellion eventually became the doorkeepers of the temple and the worship leaders for David along with the sons of Asaph. 10 of the Psalms are ascribed to the Sons of Korah. Who would know more about the dwelling place of God other than the doorkeepers of the temple?

Another reason that this Psalm deserves our attention is because it is considered one of the most important and influential Psalms by our church fathers. Spurgeon called Psalm 84 "the Pearl of Psalms" and "the most sweet of the Psalms of Peace." There is something about God's dwelling and his presence that demands the attention of all believers. So, as we focus in on this passage this morning I want us to understand it's setting. As the doorkeepers of the temple the Sons of Korah would observe the people of Israel and the world as they would make

pilgrimages to the temple. This Psalm is all about the pilgrimage many would make to the Temple because they longed to be in the place where God's glory dwelt and to be among the other worshippers in unity of their love for God. Spurgeon details what it must have been like; "Families journeyed together, making bands which grew at each halting place; they camped in sunny glades, sang in unison along the roads, toiled together over the hill and through the slough, and as they went along, stored up happy memories which would never be forgotten. One who was debarred the holy company of the pilgrims, and the devout worship of the congregation, would find in this Psalm fit expression for his mournful spirit." These people were hungry for the fellowship of the body and the presence of God.

So the question that begs to be asked this morning is... How much do we desire God's presence? I remember developing a desire for God's presence at an early age. I would go to my church and before the message the choir would sing and people would flood the altar and be weeping and pouring out their prayers and burdens to God and sometimes Pastor Dale would not even be able to preach because so many people were coming to the altar. And I would find myself crying and praying and I don't know any other way to describe it except I felt the presence of God there. There is something that can't be explained about the way you feel when you are experiencing a move of God with the people of God. You just had to be there. In a lot of ways I've been chasing that feeling... the feeling of being with God or dwelling with God, my whole life.

I don't have any statistics or ways to quantify this statement except my own experience, but it feels that most people aren't like that. And when I say a lot of people, I'm talking about Christian people. Of course we couldn't expect non-believers to have a strong desire for the presence of God... but for those who claim to be Christians, which by definition means that they are followers of Christ, to not desire the presence of God seems oddly common. Of course we could look to church attendance statistics as a measure of the lack of a desire for God's dwelling, but in my experience it seems that a vast majority of the people who attend church don't even seem to desire the presence of God in a way that extends beyond the desires of the lost. We can see this in the blank expressions and bored demeanor of those who walk into a church building, plant themselves in a seat, fold their hands, and stare into the void of their religious obligation with very little zeal for the worship of an awesome God, the word of an almighty God, or prayers to a Holy God.

So I feel that the order for me as your pastor this morning is a tall order. How can I instill in you a desire for the presence of God? How can I shake you out of your apathy and religiosity and make you want to chase the high of God's presence? And here's the good news for you and me... I can't do it... but perhaps God's word can. As **A.W. Tozer says in his book "Experiencing the Presence of God," "if God cannot disturb us, He cannot**

move us. If he cannot move us, he cannot save us. If He cannot get us concerned about the things of God, he cannot do anything at all for us.” Basically... if you don't want God's presence then you don't want God and you aren't a believer. That is why this morning I want us to see that.. **A**

Desire for God's Presence is The Definitive Characteristic of God's People

Let's read **Psalm 84** and then dig in deeper to see what it truly means to desire God's dwelling place. As we look at this passage we need to recognize that this was written within the context of the writer so we have to look at that perspective... but the presence of God has been a progressive theology in the sense that it has changed throughout the story of the Bible. So this morning there is actually 4 different perspectives we need to look at this Psalm through.

Teaching (Expand on the Problem, God)

The first perspective to view this Psalm through is a... **Past Perspective: The Temple Was A Destination for Those Who Desired God's Presence.** Before we look at the presence of God in the Temple let's first take a broader look at the presence of God and answer some questions you might have. The first question you may have would be, “isn't God's presence everywhere?” The answer is yes. We call it the omnipresence of God. **Psalm 139** tells us that he is everywhere. God exists everywhere at the same time. His Holy Spirit is in a broader sense in all places at all times. So when we speak about the presence of God we may be speaking about his omnipresence, but in most cases we are talking about something more tangible and apparent. Regardless, the question isn't whether God is present, the question is whether we are aware of his presence.

When speaking of the presence of God which seems more apparent in various situations we are speaking of the manifest presence of God called his Shekinah Glory. Shekinah means manifest presence. The real apparent presence of God. When we see the word “Dwell” the root for that word in the greek is the same root for the word shekinah meaning the presence of God. The shekinah glory of God is revealed in miraculous and experiential ways.

In the Old Testament the presence of God wasn't in everyone or even with everyone. The presence of God was a territorial thing. In the beginning the presence of God was regulated to Adam & Eve in the garden. Then it was specific towards Noah in the Ark. Later there God's presence to Abraham in the blessings to his family, and to Moses in the Burning Bush, etc... As the Israelites were formed into a nation in the wilderness they were given the Tabernacle. Here God's Presence would appear above the Ark of the Covenant in the Holy of Holies where the

high priest would make atonement for the people. Now instead of specific instances to specific people, the presence of God could always be found in a common locale. As the Israelites moved throughout the desert they would take the tabernacle with them so that they always had the presence of God with them. Eventually the Ark of the Covenant was stolen by the Philistines and the days of the tabernacle seemed to be at an end. Eventually when the Ark was brought back to Israel it was taken to the house of Abinadab. Years later King David's heart was broken that there was no place for the glory of God to rest and brought the Ark of the Covenant back to the city of Jerusalem. It was at this point that David had it in his heart to build a permanent tabernacle called the Temple. Of course David couldn't build it because of his bloodshed but Solomon his son did. Solomon's temple was one of the greatest buildings ever constructed and was a worthy house for the Lord's glory. The Temple became a lighthouse for the entire world to see the glory of God and people would travel months just to visit the temple for a few hours and offer their sacrifices. It was a destination for those who desired God's presence.

Look again at **Psalm 84**. The Temple was a home for the weary and marginalized **vs.3**. Blessed were those who would dwell in the Temple, singing his praise **vs.4**. It was a place to appear before God **vs.7** and to have your prayers heard **vs.8**. No wonder people would travel months to be there. This was God's dwelling place, where the Shekinah glory of God resided and if you wanted to be in the presence of God then you had to seek out the place where God was. **David Legge remarks, “a vital principle of guidance in our christian pilgrimage is that we are to follow God, we are to find out where His presence is, we are to look for where He is moving.”** This is a simple principle which we've talked about a lot over the past two years. If you want the presence of God... **find out where God is moving and do everything you must to join him there.** Look again at **Psalm 84:2 – my soul longs and faints for the courts of the lord.** **A Desire for God's Presence is The Definitive Characteristic of God's People .**

Experiencing God's presence in the Temple wasn't as easy as just showing up either. There was burnt offerings for substitutionary atonement. There was required worship through festivals and cooperate gatherings. It was even more demanding if you were a Gentile. In that case you had to abandon your culture and adopt Israeli tradition by being circumcised and even then you had to remain in the outer court never really being a full part of the family. The point is simple... You truly had to desire the presence of God – you had to come to God, move, and basically change everything for his presence.

And then you get to **Ezekiel 9-12** and we see something that should make us weep. The presence of God, His Holy Spirit, leaves the temple. The nation of Israel abandoned God and turned to idols and stopped seeking his presence and so God simply left. As soon as the Spirit departed

the Temple and Israel, Judah was sent into captivity in Babylon. This is scary but I think we get a principle that we can't ignore. If the people stop desiring the presence of God (mostly because of apathetic worship and sinful idolatry) then God will eventually leave. How can we grasp this? God actually took his presence from his people because they no longer wanted him? **A Desire for God's Presence is The Definitive Characteristic of God's People**

The second perspective to view this Psalm through is... a **Past & Present Perspective: Jesus Was God's Presence in Human Form**

Jesus called himself the temple in **John 2:19**. The presence of God was made flesh and dwelt among us. Why? Because in Christ we could actually see who God was. Look at **Hebrews 1:1-4**. He is the the image and icon of the living God. If you wanted to see God look at Jesus. If you wanted to be in the presence of God be with Jesus. I mean, notice just how many people were drawn to Jesus. Everywhere he went people followed cause they wanted to be in the presence of God.

Jesus showed us God's love. Hear again **John 3:16-17**. What a love? My sins are paid for by the selfless sacrifice of God's son. Yes he healed, cast out demons, and fed the 5,000, but ultimately the love of God is God himself sacrificed on the cross for our sins & raised from the grave for our restoration.

Now look again at **Psalm 84**. Who's soul would not long and faint for this presence of God **vs.2** ? Who's heart and flesh would not sing for joy for this living God? Blessed are those who's strength is in you Jesus **vs.5**. Look at **vs.9** – he is our shield from the wrath of God for he is God's anointed one. And blessed is the one who trusts in him **vs.12**.

Most importantly Jesus shows us how to love God as he deserves. Look how he lived. He prayed, he was dedicated to the word, he was dedicated to cooperate worship, he was dedicated to discipleship evangelism, he was dedicated to relational outreach, and he was obedient in all ways to God the Father. By showing us how to love God relationally Jesus wasn't just the presence of God but experienced the presence of God. And here's the good news... we don't need to do religious rituals in a temple anymore to experience the presence of God...

we can experience the presence of God through the same means that Christ did... a relationship with God. Do you desire a relationship with Jesus Christ? **A Desire for God's Presence is The Definitive Characteristic of God's People**

The third perspective to view Psalm 84 through is our **Present Perspective: The Church of Christ Is Where You Will Find the Presence of God on Earth Today**. So... The Holy Spirit now lives in us. Those who have surrendered their lives to Christ. When Jesus ascended

he told us he was sending the Holy Spirit. And even though the Holy Spirit is omnipresent, the Holy Spirit manifest is what believers have been chasing throughout history. So that is why what happened at pentecost was so amazing. At pentecost the Holy Spirit was put inside the hearts of men as opposed to an ark, a bush, a tabernacle or a temple and it fulfilled the prophecy spoke about in **Ezekiel 36:26-27** ; the new covenant in the Spirit. In Ezekiel we see the Spirit depart the Temple but just as the Spirit had departed the temple – now it would return in men. And now we see that **where God's presence had always been around men... now it could actually be in them .**

But this is only half of this theology. A single independent believer indwelt by the Holy Spirit is not necessarily the dwelling place of the manifest presence, Shekinah Glory of God. The Church is the temple of the Holy Spirit now. Look at **Ephesians 2:18-22**. So yes, individually as believers we house the Holy Spirit, we have been baptized by the Spirit and he indwells us, but the manifestation of that spirit outwardly as in the temple is now in the church. And the church is not a building... it is a people, the gathering of the believers. The dwelling place of the presence of God is in the coming together of individual believers as the church. So... **if we want to feel the manifest presence of God as they did in the Temple and as they did in Jesus Christ in the flesh then we can only do that in fellowship with the saints in the church**. One of the defining verses concerning this theology is **Matthew 18:20** where we see that when two or three are gathered there God is; there his manifest presence is. God dwells in his church.

So again lets look to Psalm 84 and see how this relates to the church in our day and time. First, lets admire how lovely is the manifest presence of God in the church **vs.1**. Let our souls longs and faint to worship God with the saints **vs.2** Let us praise him together as our hearts and flesh sing for God. **vs.2** In the Church we see that it is a place where our young can be disciplined within the body **vs.3**. We also recognize that blessed are those who don't forsake the church **vs.4** Blessed are those who will get in their car and pack up the family and bring them to be with the church **vs.5-6**. The church is where we are disciplined from strength to strength and are equipped **vs.7** And so we recognize that one day with the church is better than a thousand elsewhere **vs.10** And that we should rather be of a lowly position in the church than to have the highest position in this world **vs.10**. In the church God doesn't withhold anything good from the church **vs.11** and blessed is the church who trusts in him **vs.12**. It's pretty clear... If you are looking for the presence of God, the shekinah glory, a revival of the spirit through the presence of the Holy Spirit... it's not found in Jerusalem, it's not found at some mega church hours away, it's not found through some religious book, speaker, seminar, concert... etc.... its found right here!

But there is still a danger here. In **Rev 2** we see that God takes the

candlestick, which represents his presence, from the church showing us that there is a possibility that God can take his presence away from a church. This harkens back to the Temple where God's presence also was taken away. And there we are reminded that if there is sin, if there is not a longing for the presence of God, and if there is no recognition of his presence then he will take away his presence. So... let us never take the presence of the Lord for granted by not taking the church seriously. We should desire the Church as we desire the presence of God. **A**

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Lastly there is a **Future Perspective: Heaven Is the Ultimate Prize of God's Presence**. Zion is another name for heaven in **Psalm 84:5**. Those who long for the eternal never ending presence of God in eternity are willing to go through the valley of Baca, which can be interpreted as dry and weary land **vs.6**. So the easy application here is this.... **those who long for heaven find joy in the trials of this life knowing they end in God's presence**. **A Desire for God's Presence is The Definitive Characteristic of God's People**

Application (Resolution, You)

So... How can we be Christians and be satisfied without the presence of God? Do we truly long to be in his dwelling place? Look at what **Brother Lawrence say - "I cannot imagine how religious persons can live satisfied without the practice of the presence of God. For my part I keep myself retired with Him in the depth of centre of my soul as much as I can; and while I am so with Him I fear nothing; but the least turning from Him is insupportable."** So the question for us this morning is; "Are we actively pursuing the presence of God as those pilgrims of old who would journey for months to reach the temple? Are we clinging to the presence of Christ as those who walked days and nights following him from city to city? If so... the present application is simple. The presence of God is in his church? If you long to feel the manifest presence of God then you long to be with your fellow brothers and sisters in unity of worship, prayer, and discipleship in the church. There is no other temple for the spirit than his church. Do you long for heaven? Not because it is an end to the pains of this world but it is the eternal presence of God.

Conclusion

Are you truly a Christian? You can know from the fruit... **A**
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