

# Understanding Psalm 84 in the New Testament

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[ 0 : 0 0 ] for those of you who have grown up like I have in psalm singing churches psalm 84 was always a favorite wasn't it there was something really lovely about it as one many of us learned how lovely is thy dwelling place oh lord of hosts to me the tabernacles of thy grace how pleasant lord they be it just comes from my heart because I learned it as a boy and with a living faith in Jesus there's just something about these words that resonate within us we know that not only is this the word of God the authority to word of God but there's just something that expresses our longing and our worship and our adoration of God I want us to stop though and I want us to ask this all important question when we sing these words what are we singing about in the New Testament what do we mean when we talk about the tabernacles of God what do we mean when we talk about the house of God what do we mean when we go through the psalm and talk about the valley of Beka the pools that are left what do we mean when we ask God to look upon our shield oh God and look with favor on your anointed one now for some people they'll say well the psalms belong to the Old Testament they have no relevance in the New Testament we can see why saints and believers in the Old Testament would want to sing them because they were about the tabernacle the temple the way of worship but that way of worship was entirely different from our way of worship in the New Testament and so it's a thing of the past and people will say well the psalms are yes there may be some meaning there's maybe some relevance and indeed there may be some a glimpse of Jesus but you know it's a thing of the past well that to me is an extreme view and I hope that we don't share it because even as a hymn singing church which we are we're also a psalm singing church and I hope the day never comes when we abandon the psalms because the psalms are the word of God and they have a huge amount to teach us and it is entirely relevant to sing these words and I want us hopefully in a few moments time to understand them better in the light of the New Testament so that as we understand them we may know what we are singing and what we mean when we sing how lovely is your dwelling place oh Lord of hosts to me but first of all let's do the construction let's divide the psalm some psalms are easily divided into parts sections the technical word is strophes s-t-r-o-p-h-e if you want to know a theological term a strophe and the nice thing about the psalms that can be divided into strophes are that we can it it leaves us with a more constructed understanding of them let me just explain what I mean in this particular psalm notice that the one word recurs time and again and it's the word blessed verse 4 blessed are those who dwell in your house verse 5 blessed are those whose strength is in you at the end of the psalm blessed is the one who is uh the man who trusts in you now that's no accident

because the word blessed in the Old Testament and in the New Testament is hugely important and it means happiness but not the kind of superficial temporary happiness that you find throughout the human race in certain places today it's the kind of happiness that you can only find in God through Jesus Christ and that's what the gospel promises that's what Jesus came to bring us he came to bring the kind of happiness that you can only find in God through his forgiveness and through that newness of life that he promises in the gospel so we're going to use that word as an anchor and we're going to see how there's three parts to the psalm each one of them encapsulated by the word blessed verse 4 is the first one blessed are those who dwell in your house and everything before verse 4 is a description of the house of God we're going to talk about that in a moment verse 5 is a different scene altogether it's a different part a different perspective but verse 5 is this blessed are those whose strength is in you different scene different focus and the third strophe the third part of the psalm again the word blessed this time it comes at the end of the psalm and it's this blessed is the one or the man or the woman who trusts in you so let's think of the psalm in three parts each one summarized by the word blessed number one is the those who dwell in your house now there's no question we're not exactly sure when the psalm was written if it was written before Solomon then it was written about the tabernacle it was the tabernacle it was the tabernacle that was in view if it was written after Solomon it was the temple that was in view now remember that the temple was only a glorified permanent tabernacle so we're talking about the same thing we're talking about the structure that God commanded Moses in the wilderness and this was the structure around which the people were to camp and this was to be the focal point of their worship and the the most sacred place in that structure was what they called the most holy place now it was both a secretive it was the and the most intensely secret place and that's because no one was ever allowed there except one person once a year and it was also the most sacred place and i'll tell you why because this is what set the tabernacle aside from every other religious structure in the world and there were plenty of them at that time here is the difference the difference is because the real God the one God the living God the almighty God actually descended to locate himself in this tabernacle if you don't believe me then read exodus read the end of exodus the glory of the Lord filled the most holy place that's what stood it out that's what

singled it out from every other religious place and when Solomon built his temple or the temple as exactly the same kind of structure except in a bit more elaborate and permanent way the same thing happened the glory of God God himself now i'm not asking you to understand this but that's what we read that the glory of the Lord came to dwell to locate himself in the most holy place and the radiance was so intense that the priests all those in attendance had to leave they couldn't stand they couldn't be there such was the the splendor and the majesty of God now that's why when this person who wrote this psalm that's why the house of God was so special to him it wasn't because of his architecture or its natural beauty or the skill of those who built the place it was because it housed the glory of God himself that's what this psalm is all about it's about the glory of God now all of this was done away with in the new testament the tabernacle was done away with when Solomon built his temple the temple was done away with shortly after Jesus so what does this mean it actually means exactly the same thing as it meant in the old testament the glory of God among us what do I mean by that well remember what we read in John chapter 1 remember what we read about Jesus the word became flesh

God became flesh God became a man and dwelt among us remember what I said before the tabernacle was God condescending to dwell in one particular place in John chapter 1 when it's talking about Jesus God condescends to become a man a human being and dwelt among us and we beheld we saw his glory the glory as of the only begotten of the Son full of grace and truth what this means is when we sing this psalm we're not singing about a building we're not singing about Bon Accord lovely as the building is we're singing about Jesus when we sing how lovely is your dwelling place we're focusing on Jesus we're focusing on the incarnation in which Jesus came down into this world in order to rescue us from sin and its consequences and in order to draw us together back into a right relationship with God no wonder this man says my soul yearns my heart faints for the courts of the Lord as he reflects on the safety that he has discovered the salvation that he has discovered the security that he has discovered in God in the presence and in the reality of God right now if you're a Christian and I hope you are if you're a believing person then you are the most secure person on earth because you have the security of the promise of God in you the psalmist couldn't help when he looked down and of course the person writing this he wasn't allowed to enter into the most holy place it just was not allowed and yet in a strange kind of way he looked at it from the outside and it's obvious that he saw that there were two types of birds that had made their nest in the outer courts of the tabernacle and same as a bird can make its nest anywhere but it's obvious that this man was watching these birds two types one was a sparrow one was a swallow very different types of bird and they're making their nest and they found security they found that safety and for him that was a picture of the safety and the security that he had found in the God of the tabernacle in the God of the temple and the same God who had kind of put his arms around and provided the safety for the swallow and the sparrow was the God how much more is he going to make that provision and has he made that provision in the Lord

Jesus Christ and therefore we can rest today in what he has done for us so that blessed are those who dwell in your house to dwell in the house of God is to follow Jesus is to trust in Jesus it's to listen to him and rest in what he has done for us second part different scene altogether this time the psalmist goes out on the road and he's watching people travelling on a road and they're travelling because they want to get to where the place of worship is regularly in Israel people would make their way at various times of festivals and the Passover and so on and so forth they would make their way to Jerusalem where worship was going to take place but that road could be long it was a day of when travel was not easy you had to travel by mule or by donkey and sometimes it was dangerous you could easily stumble and fall and it was a long and it was a difficult road and as the person who's writing this he's kind of poetically thinking of that journey as a picture of the Christian life day to day day after day week after week a long journey where there are dangers there are pitfalls challenges it's not an easy journey and he mentions one particular place which is especially difficult and he calls it the valley of

[ 15 : 48 ] Beka now there's uncertainty as to where this place actually was but it's clear that the valley of Beka was a difficult place he describes it in one of two ways some people think it was a valley of tears and other people think it was a valley of dryness perhaps both of these analogies perhaps both of these pictures are relevant to the kind of difficulties that many Christians have to face as they live from day to day and year to year following Jesus there are tears God has never promised that he will be a wall of immunity around us sheltering us from all the difficulties that are in this world whether that be sadness whether that be sickness and disappointment and unusual things that happen to us sudden accident sudden change of our life for the worst we don't know what's going to happen to us we live in that uncertainty from day to day and

God has not said I will shield you from all of these things what he has said is number one you're not alone in your suffering and in your tears and number two that he will accompany us in our suffering and in our tears we have that absolute certainty not only that God accompanies us through this but that he indwells us in the person of his Holy Spirit and that he will give the strength and the encouragement at the right time sometimes it doesn't feel that way sometimes it feels as if God is nowhere to be seen we'll look at that this evening when we're talking about the question why is it so hard to pray and it's at times like that when we don't feel that God is near us that we have to go back to the promises and take

God at his word so whether for you today is a place of dryness or a place of tears and it could well be please don't think that you're on your own in that please don't think that you're suffering something unusual for a Christian but please listen to what God is saying to us that he is our great high priest who is touched with a feeling of our infirmities Jesus knows what it's like to go through this valley because he was in every way like us except he didn't sin he knows what it's like to have to face the challenges and the difficulties of a fallen world part number three it's summed up at the very end of the psalm when it says blessed is the man who trusts in you and this time our focus is on

God now of course we started off by being focused on God but now we're looking into heaven and we're asking God for some strange requests we're asking God first of all to hear my prayer well we're going to be talking about that this evening but then he asked God to look on our shield and to look with favour on your anointed one with every reason to believe that the shield is the anointed one what does that mean when we're singing this psalm look on our shield look on your anointed what does that mean how can we sing it with relevance how can we know what we mean when we don't understand it well when the psalm was written of course it would have referred to the king because the king was the anointed one and the king of

Israel was more than just a king he was God's king the king who represented the rule of God but the anointed one has a very special meaning in the Bible it literally means Messiah Messiah the word means God's anointed and every king in the Old Testament looked forward sometimes they were pretty hopeless nonetheless the fact that they were anointed by God looked forward to one day when there would be a perfect anointed king and that was no less than Jesus Christ our great Messiah so in the light of the New Testament and in the light of everything that Jesus has done what do we mean when we sing look with favour on your anointed well I want to suggest that the scene is in heaven and it's a conversation between the father and the son the book of the

[ 21 : 45 ] New Testament tells us that when Jesus ascended he sat down at the father's right hand and the New Testament also tells us that he makes intercession for us which means that there is a conversation taking place between the father and the son now you know when you're having a conversation with someone you ever been in a conversation with someone and the other person is looking everywhere but at you it's very annoying isn't it maybe I have that habit I hope I don't I hope when I'm talking to you I look at your face because when you look at your face it it kind of testifies that I'm really interested in what you're saying it's a bit like when they tell us about doing live streaming you have to look at the camera why is it important to look at the camera because so that to give the impression that you mean business and that's what I think the psalmist means here there's this conversation in which the father is looking at the son because he is intensely concerned about that conversation and what the son has to say do you know what they're talking about they're talking about the church on earth they're talking about the gospel they're talking about fellowship they're talking about where believing God's precious children are suffering right now because they believe in

Jesus they're talking about bon accord they're talking about the difficulties that you are going through in your Christian life it's hard to believe isn't it that almighty God the God of the universe is concerned about me and you I mean who are we we're tiny and yet the God who has promised that not even a sparrow falls without him knowing it has promised how much more does he take care and is he concerned about your life and my life your witness and my witness your stumbling and my stumbling and he is concerned that we should be restored and forgiven and strengthened and encouraged and that we should organise ourselves as a congregation so that we will be strengthened and encouraged in the way in which we live for him so when we sing this psalm we're thinking about what's going on in heaven we have a great high priest who ever lives to make intercession for us hence given that it's better to be a doorkeeper the more the psalmist realise of what's going on what's really going on this is him as Spurgeon once said doing real business with

God and the house of God is the best place to be that's why we want to be a worshipping people because we know how real it is to interact with God it goes on to tell us the Lord God is a sun and a shield he's both the sun the radiant sun s-u-n by the way the sun that we see in the sky that produces especially in these countries so much intense heat so much heat that we wouldn't be able to endure it without a shield but he's also the shield again a picture of Jesus who else is going to shield us sinful people from the glory the righteous glory of God Jesus in his death and his resurrection and because he has shielded us and because he has come down to rescue us from our sin and because he has united himself and declared his undying divine love for us he promises this no good thing

I'm going to leave you with this because the time has gone no good thing please listen to this please let me start again listen no good thing does he withhold from those whose walk is blameless does that mean that I have to live a perfect life in order to see that promise nobody lives a perfect life the person whose walk is blameless is the person who trusts and follows Jesus who has lived a blameless life on our behalf now listen to the promise again no good thing does he withhold from his people do you believe that this morning do you believe that as you sit before him this morning that God has blessed us this is the way he puts it in the New Testament he has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in Christ

Jesus he has withheld nothing from you what what a reality how much more should we rejoice in God this morning as we think of his goodness to us in Jesus Christ how can we not worship him love him when we think of his grace his forgiveness his incredible love for us a love that will extend beyond this life and into eternity our father it is almost beyond our capacity to understand why you should love us and yet you have declared that love in the person of Jesus Christ and you have promised that you will withhold no good thing from us

[ 28 : 26 ] Lord we pray to rest in that certainty this morning before we do anything else Lord let us rest in that promise because God is for us and therefore who can be against us so Lord as we face so many unusual things and so much uncertainty as far as we are concerned we pray to place our trust in you and we pray to relish and treasure your word in Jesus name Amen