

Psalms 84:9-12 (Robert Kerr) 71843

Bible Treasury: Volume N9, Psalm 84:9-12, Address on (84:9-12)

If we but look at the whole of this psalm, we shall find treasures on the very surface, yet is there hidden wealth as well. Even the very reading of it can hardly be without some profit.

"Thine anointed" takes us at once beyond David. David certainly was the Lord's anointed, but the One really meant is the Lord Jesus Himself. There is sweet reflection arising out of this scripture. Jehovah could ever look upon the face of His Anointed with delight. Is there not something peculiarly sweet and precious in that thought?

But there is more in it than that. Why should He say, "Behold, O God our shield, and look upon the face of thine anointed"? In Israel, when the king went wrong, all the people went wrong; when the head went right, all went right. The Lord Jesus is the Head of the new creation, and God looks on Him and sees all the rest in Him. It is in virtue of Him that all good comes to us.

"For a day in thy courts is better than a thousand." It is singular to see how this follows on the last verse. You observe the opening of the psalm, "How amiable are thy tabernacles, O Lord of hosts!" Why tabernacles? At this time, as you know, the temple was not built. When David brought the ark from Kirjath-jearim he pitched a tent for it. Where the ark, the symbol of Jehovah's presence, went, there went Jehovah. Jehovah's throne in Israel was the golden lid of the ark, and to come where the ark was, was to appear before God.

Why were the tabernacles so amiable? There is always a charm about that word—amiable, lovable. What made the tabernacles so lovely, so desirable? Was it the material of which they were formed? "My soul longeth, yea, even fainteth for the courts of Jehovah; my heart and my flesh crieth out for the living God." This was what gave all the beauty and loveliness—God was there, the One who had done such great things for His people. That was why the psalmist delighted to be in the courts of the Lord. We must rejoice to be in His presence since He has done so much for us. So Paul says, "We also exult in God through our Lord Jesus Christ." And Peter, "Rejoice, inasmuch as ye are partakers of Christ's sufferings; that when his glory shall be revealed, ye may be glad also with exceeding joy." "In whom, though now ye see him not, yet believing, ye rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory." To know yourself as the object of God's love and care, to know that He claims you for Himself, this gives exceeding joy, beyond anything else.

But how have these tabernacles to do with us? Just in this way. We know there is now no material building on earth, and it is well to know that. Men are continually speaking of the temple of God; they erect a costly, ornate building, they consecrate it, and call it the house of God. But are we not divinely told that He "dwelleth not in temples made with hands"? Still, God has His house here. In writing to Timothy Paul says, "That thou mayest know how thou oughtest to behave thyself in the house of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth." The church of the living God is composed of all the true saints of God, built of spiritual stones, "builded together for an habitation of God through the Spirit."

"Know ye not that ye are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you?" Did the psalmist so delight in being where God was? Well, you see the application to ourselves. The Lord said, "Where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them." How far do we really believe that? Do we love to be where He is? For there is something very special in that. The heaven, and heaven of heavens, cannot contain Him, I know, but He gives this special promise to those gathered to His name. We should love to be there; it may be a poor company, for "not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, are called." When the Lord Jesus was on earth He was not found in palaces and in the mansions of the great. The home at Bethany was where He delighted to be. He stooped to the grave for us, and He deigns now to be with us. His love it is that brings Him there.

"I had rather be a doorkeeper in the house of my God, than to dwell in the tents of wickedness."

It is easy to see the force of that. The doorkeeper has to be first to admit others, and has to remain till the last; he is there longest of all. In the margin it reads, "I would choose rather to sit at the threshold." We get a different thought in this; he is content with the threshold, the lowest place, so long as he is in God's presence. Was God there? He would be there too. He longed to be thus in communion with God, so consciously near. And this is what the new nature longs for. We delight to have it so, and to be searched out, so that there be nothing to hinder communion at all.

Let us read verses 10 and 11 together. "I had rather be a doorkeeper in the house of my God, than to dwell in the tents of wickedness. 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." Here we have a cluster of reasons—what He is, what He will give, and what He will not withhold. Surely these are comprehensive things.

"Jehovah God is a sun." You remember in the account of the creation that God set two great lights in the heavens, the greater to rule the day, and the lesser to rule the night. In the sun we have the most marvelous, gorgeous display of God's creative power.

It is not surprising to find God described as a sun; indeed, it is most appropriate. But His name! Jehovah Elohim—the LORD God! As we read elsewhere, "The LORD, The LORD God, merciful and gracious, longsuffering, and abundant in goodness and truth, keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin." What a description! There we have God proclaiming His own name, declaring what He Himself is. Hear what David says in 1 Chronicles 29:11-14, "Thine, O Jehovah, is the greatness, and the power, and the glory, and the victory, and the majesty: for all that is in the heaven and in the earth is thine; thine is the kingdom, O Jehovah, and thou art exalted as head above all. Both riches and honor come of thee, and thou reignest over all; and in thine hand is power and might; and in thine hand it is to

make great, and to give strength unto all." "All things come of Thee." What a glorious ascription to our great God!

Then what great words we get in 1 Timothy 1:17: "Now unto the King eternal, immortal, invisible, the only God, be honor and glory forever and ever. Amen." And again in the last chapter of the same Epistle, vers. 15, 16, "The blessed and only Potentate, the King of kings, and Lord of lords; who only hath immortality, dwelling in the light which no man can approach unto; whom no man hath seen, nor can see; to whom be glory and power everlasting. Amen."

The Lord God is indeed a sun, and He is thus set before us in His greatness. But He is the invisible God, remember, though there are glories belonging to Him that can be manifested. Moses had to be told that no man could see Him and live. But He who is the image of the invisible God, the only begotten Son, has declared Him. We all know something of what the sun does for us. If the sun were withdrawn this would be a world of ice. We get a faint idea in the winter of what it would be like. We are all led to feel the wonderful importance of the sun, and we ought to feel its influence and be impressed by it. Where should we be, indeed, but for light? —without the light-giving, health-giving, glorious, glorious sun? And the Lord is a sun, He gives life and breath to all things, He is good to all. Such is our God. What a world this would be had not sin come in to spoil and darken! What a world it will be when He comes to reign, when the Sun of righteousness shall arise with healing in His wings!

The Lord God is also a shield. We need not dwell long upon that, though there is a vast store of meaning there as well. The ancient warriors used a shield to protect their person from the arrows, spears, darts, etc., used in battle. So our God is our shield. How little we know what numerous perils we escape every day of our lives because He Himself protects us. We should bear this in mind constantly. I dare say we have all often thought of Peter. Satan had desired to have him, that he might sift him as wheat, and Peter knew nothing about it. But the Lord's eye was upon him, the eye that never sleeps, and He said, "I have prayed for thee."

Not one of His own can pass through death —not only without His permission, but — without His express will. He has all authority, remember. All the invisible realms of the universe are under His control. And it is indeed true that "Not a single shaft can hit, Till the God of love sees fit." "O Israel, trust thou in Jehovah: he is their help and their shield" — an impenetrable shield. "O house of Aaron, trust in Jehovah: he is their help and their shield. Ye that fear Jehovah, trust in Jehovah: he is their help and their shield." And certainly all who have come to Christ are exhorted to trust in the Lord.

So these two things tell us what He is in Himself. Then we come to what He gives. "He will give grace and glory." The sun is always giving forth of its abundance of light and heat and fruit producing power. Just so is our Sun giving forth to His creatures. "The eyes of all wait upon thee; and thou givest them their meat in due season. Thou openest thine hand, and satisfiest the desire of every living thing." We are apt to lose sight of the fact that every living creature is dependent upon Him for existence during every moment of its life.

See what a Giver our God is! When we come to contemplate Him in that character we are soon overwhelmed. As the sun gives and gives and is never exhausted, so with our God. "I am Jehovah; I change not" — our unfailling God! Oh, that we were wise and trusted Him as He is worthy to be trusted — as He entreats us to trust Him! One of our hymns says: —

Certainly we come to think of it as being the free, unmerited favor of God. "The God of all grace" — what fullness there! What may we not expect from Him?

"By grace are ye saved" — a whole cluster of blessings lies in that simple statement.

"That in the ages to come he might show the exceeding riches of his grace in his kindness toward us by Christ Jesus." Think of what the "riches of His grace" must be, and then not only that, but "exceeding riches." He is going to make a display of all that in the ages to come.

Not only are we saved by grace, but we are kept by grace continually. "My grace is sufficient for thee." The Lord had made known to Paul how great things he must suffer for His name's sake, and so, when starting on his work for the Lord, he goes with these two things in mind—the great suffering he was to endure and His sufficiency. Was the promise fulfilled? Did he not say towards the close of his career, "I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me"?

"God is able to make all grace abound toward you; that ye, always having all sufficiency in all things, may abound to every good work." Do you not see how such a scripture should enlarge our hearts, and enlarge our idea of Him and of what He is able to do? Having all grace we should abound to every good work.

But it does not end there; the two are inseparable—grace and glory. He is going to conduct us into glory. "Now to him that is able to keep you from falling, and to present you faultless before the presence of his glory with exceeding joy."

There is much of New Testament teaching in this 11th verse of our Psalm. God is presented to us in this attractive, inspiring, strengthening way. We are led to feel that His giving is spontaneous. He gives because He delights to give. Is it not from His own Son that we have the words, "It is more blessed to give than to receive"? Would such words come from the natural heart of man? Its cry is, like the horse-leach's daughters, "Give! give!" To receive largely is the acme of blessedness to the natural man. God says, No, "it is more blessed to give"; and He constitutes Himself the supreme Giver.

"No good thing will he withhold from them that walk uprightly." You say, "Is not that limiting?" It ought not to be. But it is a very salutary word for us. Do you think it is excluding you? Let it search you. Let its light go through your innermost being. David could say, "Search me, O God, and know my heart." We have in Nathanael a sample of an "upright" man— "an Israelite indeed in whom there is no guile."

God made man upright, but he sought out many inventions. He is no longer upright, though he seeks to hide it. When the Spirit of God convicts of sin, and the cry goes up, "God be merciful to me a sinner," then the man is beginning to straighten himself. And when we experience God's full forgiveness, what is there to hide—what need for guile? "Thou desirest truth in the inward parts."

This has to do with the becoming attitude to God and to our fellow men. Is it not the aim of every true child of God to walk uprightly, so as to be pleasing to Him? "No good thing will he withhold from them that walk uprightly."

Then what a grand outburst there is at the close: "O Jehovah of hosts, blessed is the man that trusteth in thee." This is the conclusion of the whole matter. Blessed are all they that trust in Him. "Oh, taste and see that the LORD is good: blessed is the man that trusteth in him. Oh, fear the LORD, ye his saints; for there is no want to them that fear him. The young lions do lack and suffer hunger; but they that seek the LORD shall not want any good thing."

"My God shall supply all your need according to his riches in glory by Christ Jesus." "If ye then being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your Father which is in heaven give good things to them that ask him?" Do not put it in your mind, "how much less," as we so often do in our folly, but, "how much more."

These are wonderful words. God grant they may sink into our hearts.

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