

Dwelling In God's Presence

By Gaye Moss

Is there a longing in your heart for the presence of God? The psalmist in Psalm 84 expresses his sincere desire to dwell in God's presence. He recognizes that God blesses those who longingly and faithfully pursue Him. He also knows that there is nothing that compares to the sweetness of God's presence. Therefore, he has set his heart on a pilgrimage to draw near to the awesome presence of God. He knows that those who sincerely seek after God will experience His wonderful grace and glory. He understands that even though there are times that God's presence and blessings seem out of reach, God is always near, and he will see the goodness of God.

It is God's sincere desire for each of us to know Him up-close and personal. He continually calls us to come into His presence so that we can have sweet communion and fellowship with Him. In that sweet communion and fellowship, we will find and experience His faithfulness, grace, and blessings.

Insight Regarding Dwelling in God's Presence From Psalm 84

1. If We Want to Experience the Sweetness of God's Presence, It is Important for Our Hearts to Cry Out to Him.

How lovely is Your tabernacle, O Lord of hosts! My soul longs, yes, even faints for the courts of the Lord; my heart and my flesh cry out for the living God. Even the sparrow has found a home, and the swallow a nest for herself, where she may lay her young—even Your altars, O Lord of hosts, my King and my God (vv. 1-3).

Even birds recognize the sweetness of God's presence. In verse three, we see that the psalmist longs for God's presence so much that he is envious of the ability of the birds to dwell so close to the presence of the Lord. The word *lovely* (Strong's, 3039) in verse one can be translated "*loved or beloved.*" The psalmist loved to dwell in God's presence so much that his whole being was crying out for God. In the Old Testament, the presence of God dwelt in the Holy of Holies in the temple in Jerusalem, and therefore, the psalmist longs for the courts of the Lord.

Question: Have you experienced God's presence in a way that causes your heart to cry out for Him, and if so, what was your experience?

2. Praise Ushers Us Into His Presence.

Blessed are those who dwell in Your house; they will still be praising You. Blessed is the man whose strength is in You, whose heart is set on pilgrimage. As they pass through the Valley of Baca, they make it a spring; the rain also covers it with pools. They go from strength to strength; each one appears before God in Zion. (vs. 4-7).

Praise is ignited in God's presence, and at the same time, praise will usher us into His presence. It is important for us to always keep in mind that praise opens the door into

God's presence. We want our hearts to be so set on seeking God that no matter what difficulty we face we make it a place of praise. As we pass through the Valley of *Baca* (weeping—Strong's, 1056), we will make it a *spring* (a source of satisfaction—Strong's, 4599) of praise. As we praise God through our difficulty, we will experience the gracious rain of God's Spirit filling our lives with *pools* (prosperity, blessing—Strong's, 1298) of blessings.

With each trial we face, as we walk by faith, we will come forth stronger. We can truly count it all joy as James exhorts us to do in James 1:2-4:

Consider it pure joy, my brothers, whenever you face trials of many kinds, because you know that the testing of your faith develops perseverance. Perseverance must finish its work so that you may be mature and complete, not lacking anything (NIV).

Questions: Have you found that praising and trusting God in the midst of trials and difficulties brings you to a place of peace and blessing and greater levels of maturity? Have you gone from strength to strength as you have praised God in times of testing?

3. Prayer Opens the Door Into His Presence.

Knowing the value of the presence of God, the psalmist prays:

O Lord God of hosts, hear my prayer; give ear, O God of Jacob! O God, behold our shield, and look upon the face of Your anointed (vs. 8-9).

At this point in the Psalm, the psalmist voices a prayer to God asking Him to look upon the face of Israel's king, whom he refers to as "*our shield* and *Your anointed.*" He is asking for God's favor and His presence to be with his nation and its leader. In the New Covenant each believer is God's anointed, and as His anointed we desperately need God to look upon our lives, as well as our nation and its leaders, with His favor and grace. Face-to-face with God is up-close and personal. Prayer opens the door into His presence where we can get up-close and personal with Him.

4. His Presence is Better than Anything Else We Could Ever Experience.

Because the psalmist has known God's presence, he understands how important it is, and he declares:

For a day in Your courts is better than a thousand. I would rather be a doorkeeper in the house of my God than dwell in the tents of wickedness (v. 10).

There is an amazing story in 2 Samuel, chapter 6. In this story we discover that David left the ark of the Lord at the house of a man named Obed-Edom for three months. Because the ark of the Lord contained the presence of God, Obed-Edom and his entire household were blessed. In 1 Chronicles 15:18, we learn that Obed-Edom became a doorkeeper in the house of God. Once we experience God's wonderful presence, we want to do everything we can to guard it and remain close to Him.

5. As We Walk Uprightly, Daily Walking in God's Presence, We Will be Protected and Blessed.

The psalmist knows from personal experience that the Lord is good to those who walk uprightly, and he therefore proclaims:

For the Lord God is a sun and shield; the Lord will give grace and glory; no good thing will He withhold from those who walk uprightly. O Lord of host, blessed is the man who trusts in You! (vs. 11-12).

The presence of God dwells within every New Testament believer. We are the doorkeepers of His presence, because we are the temples of the Holy Spirit (1 Cor. 3:16). When we guard and honor His presence, through faithfulness and obedience, we will walk in His grace and glory, and we will experience all the good things that He has for us. He will be our sun and shield. He will light our way, providing all the wisdom and protection we need to live victoriously. We can rest assured that He is our personal counselor and our personal bodyguard.

Questions: How have you experienced the blessing and favor of God as you have walked in obedience and trust before Him? What are some ways that we guard and honor God's presence?

Lesson Application: Ask God to help you set your heart on a pilgrimage to daily dwell in His presence. Ask Him to show you any areas of your life where you are not fully trusting in His strength and faithfulness. As He shows you, commit those things to Him. Make a commitment that you are going to rest and trust in the promise that He is your sun and your shield, and He will give you His grace and glory.

Conclusion: I know a godly man who was removed from a position of leadership at his work very unexpectedly. He was really taken by surprise, because things were going very well, and he was having great success at that time. He was totally confused by the situation. He was grateful that he still had a job, but he was hurt and bewildered by the circumstances that surrounded him.

He began to set his heart on a pilgrimage to seek after God. As he walked through that time of testing, he began to make it a place of praise. As he stayed in an attitude of praise in the midst of the test, he discovered the rain of God's Spirit filling his life with spiritual blessings that far outweighed anything else.

He began to experience a peace and rest in the Lord that he had not experienced before that time. As he continued to walk by faith in the midst of his test, he matured in wonderful ways in his Christian life. The test became a blessing that he is still walking in today. God has so blessed his life that he can truly say that God has not withheld any good thing from him.

As we apply the principles of Psalm 84 to our lives, we will go from strength to strength. And we will find that we are walking in His glorious presence, experiencing spiritual blessing that far outweigh anything else.

(Unless otherwise indicated all Scripture quotes are taken from the NKJV of the Bible.)

