

May 22

Scriptures: Read Psalms 84 & 85

Key Verse: “Surely His salvation is near to those who fear Him, that glory may dwell in our land.” (Psalm 85:9)

Overview

Psalm 84 is the song of a pilgrim who is full of expectancy and happily making his way to Jerusalem to worship and give praise to the Lord. He is full of intense longing to be in the wonderful, peaceful Tabernacle. For him, one day at the tabernacle is better than living a thousand years. To serve God in the humblest position as a doorkeeper is better than living luxuriously with the wicked (84:10). It seems from the way he speaks that he had been in the Tabernacle before but had been away from it for some time and his whole being was yearning to return (84:2).

This psalm is surprisingly similar in tone and perspective to Psalm 42 and 43, which were also composed by a Korahite (they served as musicians and some as gatekeepers; 1 Chron. 6:33-38; 9:19). In Psalm 42 and 43, the psalmist is sorrowfully leaving his land, possibly as a captive. Could it be that Psalm 84 was composed by the same man who is now returning to the Tabernacle in answer to his faith-filled prayer request (43:3-5)? It is a beautiful thought. We know that the Lord is indeed faithful, and He does answer prayer.

Like the birds that had made their homes in the sanctuary precincts, the psalmist desires to do the same, that he might always be close to the presence of God. He knew that the man who dwells in God’s house is blessed, having continual communion with Him, forever praising Him, finding strength in Him, serving Him, and trusting Him. “Blessed” can be translated as “happy”, for he receives good things from God, such as His grace and mercy. For such a person as this, who walks uprightly, the Lord is a sun and shield, for he experiences the light of life and the protection of His presence (84:11).

While on the pilgrimage, the psalmist and those accompanying him, would pass through “the Valley of Baca”, which literally means “weeping”. It was likely a long and dangerous journey, full of troubles and sorrows yet the Lord sustained and strengthened them and the dry land became like a spring with abundant water (cf. Isaiah 35:7; 48:21). God saw that all those faithful pilgrims reached their destination, that they might worship the Lord together (84:7; Heb. 10:25), just as He will for those of us today who will one day be in His presence in glory.

Psalm 85 is a song of great emotion and a prayer for revival. The psalmist remembers God’s mercies and goodness. Once he had not shown favour to His land, nor to His people; but then His anger turned and He forgave His people of their sin, which was the cause of all their troubles, leading to their captivity and exile. It is possible that this psalm refers to the Babylonian captivity of Judah and their return (Jer. 29:14; 2 Chron. 36:20-21). Although the Lord had brought them back and forgiven them, they were still in need of physical and spiritual revival, for they were in a poor condition (cf. Nehemiah 1:3). When sin is present, it naturally brings about the wrath of

God. The righteous psalmist longed for God to look upon His people only with pleasure not with wrath, so they might rejoice in Him.

After his prayer, he paused to hear what the Lord would answer. He was confident that God would speak peace. There would come a time when God would look upon His people with only pleasure, but they must be careful to “not turn back to folly”, which implies moral failure (85:8). Truly, as the psalmist foresaw, salvation was near for those who fear God. God gave the psalmist a prophetic message, and he envisioned a time when mercy, truth, righteousness, and peace would meet together in close union upon the earth, which would be a time of great blessing (cf. Isaiah 32:16-18). This time will only be realized when our Lord Jesus comes to rule and reign over the earth as is portrayed in Psalm 72. In Him is righteousness, and in His footsteps we will be guided (85:13).

Prayer

We pray, dear Lord, for a mighty revival in our land today. Cause all people to acknowledge and fear You, as You make Yourself real to them. Use us for such a purpose in the last days.