

PSALM 84: GOD IS GOOD

praying psalm 84 to undermine your need for comfort

Look on the Anointed

The most interesting part in Psalm 84 is the prayer in vs.8-9. It is not readily apparent why, in the midst of talking of God's goodness, the psalmist suddenly stops to pray for God's anointed, the king. What does the king have to do with knowing and experiencing the goodness of God?

For the Israelite, their hope was anchored to God's promise that one day he'd put a Forever King on the throne of David, and that king would bring God's kingdom into being, and the whole earth would be full of the presence and glory of God. So the psalmist prays for God to "look upon your anointed," asking God to fulfill his promise. The connection is clear: if God looks upon the anointed King, then God looks upon the whole nation, and God's presence becomes a reality for everyone.

The good news is that what the psalmist looked forward to has come to be in Jesus Christ, God's anointed king! Jesus brought in the kingdom of God, announcing God's blessing and favor on the poor, the broken, and the needy. Everyone who longed for God could know him through Jesus!

"If you knew that there was one greater than yourself, who knows you better than you can know yourself and loves you better than you can love yourself, who can make you all you ought to be, steadier than your squally nature, able to save you from squandering your glorious life, who searches you beyond the standards of earth . . . one who gathered into himself all great and good things and causes, blending in his beauty all the enduring color of life, who could turn your dreams into visions and make real the things you hoped were true, and if that one had ever done one unmistakable thing to prove, even at the price of blood — his own blood — that you could come to him, and having failed, come again, would you not fall at his feet with the treasure of your years, your powers, service and love? And is there not one such, and does he not call you?" (A. E. Whitham).

Look on Jesus, who alone can heal your lukewarm heart, grant you undivided affections, and give you a deep and true longing for God alone! He calls you to repent of your lesser comforts and pleasures, and be satisfied in him!

PSALM 84: GOD IS GOOD

so we don't have to look elsewhere

Fighting Through Meditation

Have you noticed how easily Christianity becomes a muddy pool of God-talk, moralism, and wishful thinking? We've got all the right words and theologies, at least on paper, but it doesn't seem to be having much affect on our lives. We give one another spiritual advice that is little more than self-help cheerleading and catchy bumper-stickers - "let go and let God!" - with very little real reflection on the God of whom we so easily speak. Though we believe in God, we live as if he and what he has done matters very little for the pressures, trials, and relationships of real life. God is not very "weighty" in our lives.

The psalmists are in a totally different category than this vague American Christianity. The psalmists are always very earthy, dealing with the very real pressures of a very real world, and being honest about their fears, hopes, and desires. But they're also doing something even more important than simply being honest: they are bringing all their fears, hopes, and longings before an almighty Creator God who is at work in His world. The psalmists are never content with bumper-sticker faith and catchy Christian slogans. They deal with the real junk of the real world, and they deal with it all in light of a real God who is rescuing his broken world.

In the midst of this beautiful and broken world, the psalmist takes hold on the only thing that offers stability: who God is and what God has done. The psalmist doesn't try to cheer himself with pithy spiritual phrases; rather, he lays claim to who God is by faith, stretching his mind and heart to hold tightly to the truth of God in the midst of a crazy world. The psalmist are fighting to stay firmly rooted in God and his word.

This fight to stay grounded in God and his word is called *meditation*. We don't typically think of meditation as a battle, but Biblical meditation is the process of digging deeply into the truth about who God is and what God has done, holding that truth firmly before our minds and hearts, and courageously proclaiming that truth to ourselves in the midst of the pressures of the world. Biblical meditation gives a solid foundation, a stable source of joy, and a deep contentedness as we learn to stay still in the steadfast love of God.

Psalm 84

Psalm 84 expresses desire and longing for God in ways that few of us could express. With a hint of nostalgia, the author of Psalm 84 looks back on a time when he was dwelling in the presence of God, worshipping God in the temple. Worshipping in the temple was the high point of an Israelite's faith in God, as this was the place where God had chosen to dwell. It was a great source of joy and comfort to come before God in worship and singing, and now that he is not in the temple, the psalmist says his whole life is wasting away because of desire to be there again! He's crying out and fainting to get to where God is! As we read Psalm 84, we're faced with a hard question: could I have penned this Psalm? Could I agree with the passionate yearnings of this man of God?

Is God Good?

Unfortunately, though we might be able to remember times in the past where God was longed for above all else, too few of us can identify with the longing of Psalm 84. Instead, we find the momentary pleasures of sin and the comforts of the American dream to be more real and pursuit-worthy. We put our time, energy, and resources into being comfortable and content. This Psalm is a rebuke to our luke-warm and half-hearted response to who God is and what God has done. We've settled for a spirituality that is just plain lazy and lackluster. We're guilty of having very divided hearts, knowing God should be beautiful and consuming, but busy pursuing all sorts of lesser beauties, looking for satisfaction and comfort elsewhere. In reality, we still believe that the pleasures of this world, the momentary ease of sin, and the comforts of the American dream are somehow more satisfying, delightful, and lovely than God himself.

Psalm 84 gives us a picture and a taste of what it might be like to long for and love God above all else. Psalm 84 invites us to listen in on someone who finds God and his presence more precious and lovely than anything in all of creation. Psalm 84 moves us toward repentance together as we see just how far we are from this kind of longing for God in order that we might come to rejoice in God together like the psalmist does.

God IS Good!

Psalm 84 offers us a startling truth to meditate on: God is not just good; God is *better*. Whatever it is that we think will bring comfort, pleasure, and satisfaction, it pales in comparison to who God is and what God has done! See how he piles up reminders of God's goodness, celebrating how much better God is

than everything else for which we long! God is the sun, the source of all that is good and life-giving; everything else is smoke and mirrors, dim reflections and pale comparisons. God is a shield, a place of protection and safety in the midst of the battle of life, a strong defender against the onslaught of life. God bestows favor and honor; he alone gives what we are looking for, and he gives it freely and fully. He is not stingy and he doesn't make you work hard for his blessings, but He freely bestows them on all who trust in him. The psalmist is working hard to remind us: whatever sin offers, God offers more and better, for God offers himself, fully and freely. God is not just good; God is better!

God is Good, So We Don't Have to Look Elsewhere

Do you love your comforts of the American life? Could it be that your love for comfort is killing your affections for God? Your love for comfort and pleasure, your avoidance of doing what is right and true, your hard-heartedness, lack of affections and love for Jesus, the fact that you don't really care that you aren't zealous for your God, that you're content with mediocrity, and you're just alright with being luke warm – this is sin that God hates, and sin for which God sent his Son to die in your place. Your need for comfort and pursuit of pleasures killed God's Son, and now you spit on his cross by your cold affections and spiritual numbness.

Revelation 3.15ff says that because of your lukewarmness, you're about to be spit out of Jesus mouth. Do you want to be spit out of his mouth? He's about to cast you off because you'd rather pursue your comforts, avoiding the hard realities of following him and loving your neighbors, rather than repent and find your first love again. Confess, repent, and turn again to Jesus!

Psalm 84 is meant to woo you away from your false lovers, your false pleasures and comforts. You long for beauty? Why are you drinking the toilet of pornography? Look up to God, the true and lasting beauty! You long for power? Why waste your strength on that which doesn't satisfy? Look to the one who gave up all power to rescue you! Do you think sexual pleasure is what you need? It cannot give you the grace and glory you're after! Take whatever it is you think you need and long for, and compare it God. God is good and better!

The bible knows nothing of a faith in God that is not also a tasting of his goodness, a rejoicing in his nearness, a heart-melting celebration of his faithfulness. Turn from your false comforts, submit your life to the Spirit's penetrating work, and let your desires lead you to the source of all comforts, God alone!