

Daily Message of Encouragement



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Psalm 84

Valuing God's Presence Above All Else

Whether it is politics, showbiz, business, and even our social circles, we live in a world where people constantly jockey for positions of status through self-promotion and opulence. To such a world, Psalm 84 says, v 10:

Better is one day in your courts
than a thousand elsewhere;
I would rather be a doorkeeper in the house of my God
than dwell in the tents of the wicked.

From a worldly standpoint, to be a doorkeeper is one of a lower status than that of a dweller in comfort. Why does the Psalmist make this comparison? Why does the Psalmist prefer to be a doorkeeper in the House of God? What is its importance?

To understand this, we have to appreciate that this Psalm was written by the sons of Korah. Korah is the man after whom is named the Korah rebellion mentioned in Numbers 16. Korah was not satisfied with the place that God had given him in the community of Israel. He wanted something better for himself. He wanted to be the leader, the one to burn incense before the Tabernacle. He organized a rebellion against Moses and Aaron. God dealt with this recalcitrant self-promotion by eliminating Korah and his gang of 250 men. True to the redemptive theme of the Scriptures, a deeper faith blooms even from acts of unfaithfulness. Korah's sons repented from their father's rebellion finding their calling in the worship community as some of the best psalmists because they realized it was better to be a doorkeeper in the house of God instead of dwelling in the opulence of the tent of the wicked.

To be a doorkeeper in the House of God is to value God's presence above all else. As we live in a world that prefers the opulence of being a tent dweller to being a doorkeeper in the House of God, we too may feel the tug of the world, to follow its recalcitrant ways of self-promotion, and to cease to be satisfied with what God has given us. How do we stay in a place of contentment in the identity that God has given us?

The Sons of Korah give us the answer in verse 5. Those who are content in what God has given them in their lives are those "whose hearts are set on pilgrimage." (v 5). The Psalmist calls us to see this life as a pilgrimage to God's kingdom. If we think this world is all that there is, we will be tempted to keep jockeying positions of privilege. When we remember that this world is a mere pilgrimage to eternal life, the new Heavens and new Earth, it makes us re-evaluate priorities in life.

Mother Teresa said, "in comparison to eternal life, even a life now filled with the most horrible kind of suffering is like one night's stay in a bad hotel room." Taking on this pilgrim mindset gives us a new resilient orientation towards the pain and suffering we face in this world, whether the pain and suffering take the form of a health crisis, or loss of a loved one, or financial worries, or unrequited loves and longings.

Taking on the pilgrim posture and finding joy as a doorkeeper in the house of God than dwelling in the tents of the recalcitrant is not a way of weakness. Rather we "go from strength to strength till each appears before God in Zion," (v 7) because we do not try to sublimate our pain by seeking status and opulence, but instead, we push through our pain and suffering with the hope of eternal life, thus developing resilience.

To be a doorkeeper in the House of God is to be near God's presence, whatever the cost. Being in the presence of God is what sons of Korah valued the most. As Christians, we worship a God whose Spirit is with us always! (Romans 8) When we find ourselves tempted to follow the recalcitrant ways of self-promotion, we are called to take on the pilgrim posture where our "soul yearns, even faints, for the courts of the Lord" (v 1). We become people who value being in God's presence above all else, "ever praising" God (v 4), then our worship of the living God will fuel our pilgrimage into courts of the Lord, our ultimate destination, now and forever!

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