

# Notes of an Address Psalms 63 and 84

by John Nelson Darby

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*We must learn God in two ways: in the midst of His blessings, and in a dry and thirsty land where no water is.*

**Scripture:** Psalm 63:1, Psalm 84:1

**Topics:** "Trust in Trials", "Experiencing God"

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## Description

John Nelson Darby explores the distinct blessings of God as expressed in Psalms 63 and 84, emphasizing the importance of experiencing God both in solitude and in community. Psalm 63 reflects a deep, personal longing for God in a barren land, while Psalm 84 celebrates the joy of God's presence amidst His blessings and fellowship with others. Darby highlights that true satisfaction comes from knowing God Himself, rather than merely enjoying His gifts. He encourages believers to trust in God through trials, recognizing that even in difficult times, His grace and strength sustain us. Ultimately, he reminds us that our journey towards glory is filled with divine refreshment and hope in Christ's return.

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## Transcript

Psalms 63 and 84.

I read these two Psalms with the hope of bringing before you the difference there is in the character of the blessing and enjoyment of God expressed in them. Both are most blessed, and in one way complete, each in itself; but there is a marked distinction between them, the former expressing perfect enjoyment in God Himself, and in Him alone; the latter, the enjoyment of Him in the midst of blessings with which He in His mercy surrounds us, and in the fellowship with them.

As saints we must realise God in both these ways, though in His mercy His general way of dealing with us is rather that of Psalm 84, that is, granting us the assistance, the help, and the comfort of outward blessings, and communion with fellow-Christians.

Psalm 23 is just proof of this. That opens with what we may call the natural condition of a saint, the quiet, peaceful enjoyment of the green pastures and still waters of the Great Shepherd of our souls. But that does not continue always, and it is not the only experience we get; sorrow and trial and failure come in, and then we learn that He restoreth the soul, and by His strength made perfect in weakness, and the table spread before our enemies, we gain the knowledge of God which says, "Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life: and I will dwell in the house of the Lord for ever." And our hearts need this sort of discipline, that we may not merely, as in the first moments of our salvation, rejoice in the love that

has redeemed us, but that we may know with what a God we have to do, and learn apart from all extraneous helps what our portion is in Himself

I examine a little more closely the Psalms before us. We may notice the opening of the 63rd; it begins with the address - "O God," not "O Lord of hosts," as in the 84th. It is not His title in covenant with Israel, but the individual apprehension of what He is in Himself. "O God, thou art my God." "My ... soul longeth for Thee, in a dry and thirsty land, where no water is." This is the land where God is learned as our God, and where there are no springs of refreshment by the way, no outward comforts, perhaps even no sources of spiritual help and strength, no "courts of the Lord," no "tabernacles." True, we may have seen and rejoiced in God's power and glory in these at other times; so we should, for they are divinely appointed means of grace and help for us; but the psalmist in verse 2 longs to see these - "as I have seen Thee in the sanctuary;" to see them thus "in a dry and thirsty land" is by no means so easy. They are not so evident there, and the heart sometimes finds it hard to say - "Because Thy lovingkindness is better than life" - is better than what ministers to life, than all the blessings and enjoyment in which life consists, and which are, whether spiritual or temporal, the off-spring of the very same lovingkindness of God. But we must realize the lovingkindness itself to be better than all the blessings it gives, and find it our joy when they are all withdrawn . . . If we have once really tasted it, we never enjoy it so much as when we have nothing else to enjoy. The Lord Jesus was, of course, the perfect illustration of this trusting in God, and finding joy in Him too, in a dry and thirsty land. We know in what sanctuary He had seen God's power and glory, and His life proves He saw them equally in this "land," which was to Him how far more dry and thirsty than to us! He could say, "I have meat to eat that ye know not of," and pray that His joy might be fulfilled in His disciples. "My soul shall be satisfied as with marrow and fatness," this too in the same circumstances of barrenness and dearth.

What a contrast between the actual position and the joy which the faithful saint derives from the presence of God! The 6th verse is just another expression of the loneliness and absence of all external sources of help and support. The light of day even, and the presence of others all gone, still the experience of what God has been gives confidence and joy and peace in the shadow of His wings; and the dry and thirsty land, the place of death to the natural man, becomes a place of blessing, and of proving the Lord's right hand upholding us.

The 84th Psalm is quite another thing as to circumstances, though of course all the joy and blessing in it spring from the same source. It is the full confidence in and desire after a God that has been known and loved, expressed in Jewish language, as the "tabernacles," "courts," and "Zion" show, and having an application to Israel of course, though I take it now in the spiritual bearing. The "tabernacle" is to us the heavenly places where we enjoy God's presence, and which are the home of our heart, just as the nest is the home of the swallow, and the place where she finds rest and joy.

It is perhaps as especially assembled together, and privileged for a while to shut out all save our heavenly home, that this psalm regards us in this sense. "They that dwell in Thy house shall be still praising thee." Praise is here the one legitimate object of our souls and employment of our lives. In secret with God conflict and petition and the like have all their places; in His house our one occupation is to be still praising Him who is our strength there, and the object of all our desires.

These desires will never be satisfied till we are for ever in His house, till we get to our God in glory, and therefore till then the way thither must be the thing that fills our hearts. "Blessed is the man ... in whose heart are the ways." These ways may be rough, they lead through the valley of Baca - the place of tears;

but what matters this if they lead home? If my heart is set on the end of my journey, the roughness of the way little matters - it brings me where I want to be, and a smoother, pleasanter path in another direction will not even have an attraction for me, it does not lead home; it gives great decision and firmness to the Christian character to keep this simply before the mind; and, after all, the valley of Baca is turned into a well to us, and we often find a deep source of spiritual blessing in the very things that cause the trials.

They are not pleasant, of course; but they are the means of breaking down these miserable fleshly hearts, and making us fit to receive the blessing our God designs to bestow; and then "the rain also filleth the pools," streams of heavenly blessing come pouring in upon us, and making our path a continuance of refreshment and help. Thus a rough road and His strength and help along it is our portion, and then we are led from strength to strength, the strength ever tried by the needs of the way, but ever renewed by the grace of our God, till we appear before Him in Zion.

The only thing for a Christian in this world is the path towards glory, that leads out of the world. In that path we can never fall; the cause of tears becomes to us means of grace and of the powerful refreshings of the Spirit, and the living waters from above divinely reanimate our courage, and all this because the Anointed is there. God looks on His face, and so all is secure to us. Nothing shall separate us from His love; neither height nor depth nor any other creature (prone as our hearts are to let any creature do it now) shall ever separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Well, beloved friends, we must all learn God in these ways - learn Him in the midst of His blessings, and in a measure by them, perhaps first, and some time or other have our hearts settled by being cast over on Himself and nothing else, being brought into a position where nothing helps God to make us happy, if I may use such an expression, and where we must find in Him alone our all - our joy, our strength, our peace, our hope - find Him such too in a dry and thirsty land where no water is.

Still, blessed be His name, He has given grace, and will give glory, and will withhold no good thing from us. Well may we say, "Blessed is the man that trusteth in thee." J. N. Darby.

Has the secret been revealed to you that Christ is the bright and morning Star? And are you practically waiting for Him? Before the sun rises, before the light of day, He will come and take us up to Himself. There I get my rest in everything, because I know that He is coming.

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