

# Back to the Beginning

*Psalm 1-2 in the Middle of the Psalter*

**Ps 84:1** *To the choirmaster: according to The Gittith. A Psalm of the Sons of Korah.*

How lovely is your dwelling place, O LORD of hosts!

<sup>2</sup> My soul longs, yes, faints for the courts of the LORD; my heart and flesh sing for joy to the living God.

<sup>3</sup> Even the sparrow finds a home, and the swallow a nest for herself, where she may lay her young, at your altars, O LORD of hosts, my King and my God.

<sup>4</sup> Blessed are those who dwell in your house, ever singing your praise!  
Selah

<sup>5</sup> Blessed are those whose strength is in you, in whose heart are the highways to Zion.

<sup>6</sup> As they go through the Valley of Baca they make it a place of springs; the early rain also covers it with pools.

<sup>7</sup> They go from strength to strength; each one appears before God in Zion.

<sup>8</sup> O LORD God of hosts, hear my prayer; give ear, O God of Jacob!  
Selah

<sup>9</sup> Behold our shield, O God; look on the face of your anointed!

<sup>10</sup> For a day in your courts is better than a thousand elsewhere. I would rather be a doorkeeper in the house of my God than dwell in the tents of wickedness.

<sup>11</sup> For the LORD God is a sun and shield; the LORD bestows favor and honor. No good thing does he withhold from those who walk uprightly.

<sup>12</sup> O LORD of hosts, blessed is the one who trusts in you!"

**Ps 85:1** *"To the choirmaster. A Psalm of the Sons of Korah.*

LORD, you were favorable to your land; you restored the fortunes of Jacob.

<sup>2</sup> You forgave the iniquity of your people; you covered all their sin.

Selah

<sup>3</sup> You withdrew all your wrath; you turned from your hot anger.

<sup>4</sup> Restore us again, O God of our salvation, and put away your indignation toward us!

<sup>5</sup> Will you be angry with us forever? Will you prolong your anger to all generations?

<sup>6</sup> Will you not revive us again, that your people may rejoice in you?

<sup>7</sup> Show us your steadfast love, O LORD, and grant us your salvation.

<sup>8</sup> Let me hear what God the LORD will speak, for he will speak peace to his people, to his saints; but let them not turn back to folly.

<sup>9</sup> Surely his salvation is near to those who fear him, that glory may dwell in our land.

<sup>10</sup> Steadfast love and faithfulness meet; righteousness and peace kiss each other.

<sup>11</sup> Faithfulness springs up from the ground, and righteousness looks down from the sky.

<sup>12</sup> Yes, the LORD will give what is good, and our land will yield its increase.

<sup>13</sup> Righteousness will go before him and make his footsteps a way.

**Ps 86:1** *A Prayer of David.*

Incline your ear, O LORD, and answer me, for I am poor and needy.

<sup>2</sup> Preserve my life, for I am godly; save your servant, who trusts in you-- you are my God.

<sup>3</sup> Be gracious to me, O Lord, for to you do I cry all the day.

<sup>4</sup> Gladden the soul of your servant, for to you, O Lord, do I lift up my soul.

<sup>5</sup> For you, O Lord, are good and forgiving, abounding in steadfast love to all who call upon you.

<sup>6</sup> Give ear, O LORD, to my prayer; listen to my plea for grace.

<sup>7</sup> In the day of my trouble I call upon you, for you answer me.

<sup>8</sup> There is none like you among the gods, O Lord, nor are there any works like yours.

<sup>9</sup> All the nations you have made shall come and worship before you, O Lord, and shall glorify your name.

<sup>10</sup> For you are great and do wondrous things; you alone are God.

<sup>11</sup> Teach me your way, O LORD, that I may walk in your truth; unite my heart to fear your name.

<sup>12</sup> I give thanks to you, O Lord my God, with my whole heart, and I will glorify your name forever.

<sup>13</sup> For great is your steadfast love toward me; you have delivered my soul from the depths of Sheol.

<sup>14</sup> O God, insolent men have risen up against me; a band of ruthless men seeks my life, and they do not set you before them.

<sup>15</sup> But you, O Lord, are a God merciful and gracious, slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness.

<sup>16</sup> Turn to me and be gracious to me; give your strength to your servant, and save the son of your maidservant.

<sup>17</sup> Show me a sign of your favor, that those who hate me may see and be put to shame because you, LORD, have helped me and comforted me.

## Psalm 84-86

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### ***BACK TO THE BEGINNING***

THE PSALTER BEGINS WITH THE FAMOUS WORDS, “**Blessed is the man who walks not in the counsel of the wicked, nor stands in the way of sinners, nor sits in the seat of scoffers” (Psalm 1:1).** It is a basic **proverbial kind of statement**, easy to

remember for its downward, sedentary motion (walk, stand, sit). The verse lends itself towards the rest of the psalm and, indeed, the rest of the book as it concerns the godly and the ungodly. Psalm 1 contrasts **the way** of the righteous with **the way** of the wicked. It pleads with us to consider the joys that are to be had in following the ways of the LORD, lest we perish in the end like the wicked.

In setting this tone, however, it understands that at the end of the day, there is only one way to walk like a righteous person. That is *through* the One who, in those days was still coming, who would be The True Righteous Man. If you are found to be in him, you too will become the righteous man. This is why Psalm 2 stands as really the second half of Psalm 1. Its last verse says, “**Kiss the Son, lest he be angry, and you perish in the way, for his wrath is quickly kindled. Blessed are all who take refuge in him**” (Ps 2:12). To walk in his way, you must be in him through faith. In one way or another, all of the Psalms after these two are about one or both of these things.

Often this is not explicit. But sometimes it is. Thus, we come to **Psalm 81-86** which are placed where they are in the middle of the middle of Book (III) of the Psalter. These **six**

psalms can be broken down into two pairs of three. The first set of three (81, 82, 83) tell us in three different ways about the “walk” of the wicked in disobedience. Three kinds of wicked persons are described, one in each psalm: God’s own people, heavenly beings, and the Gentiles.

The second set of three (84, 85, 86) tell us in three different ways about the “walk” of the righteous. Those three reach their climax however, not in *our* walk by itself, but in the walk of “a righteous individual speaker ... who has not been a participant in the failures of ... and stands out from the wayward nation[s].”<sup>1</sup> He becomes the speaker of Psalm 86.<sup>2</sup> You can hear echoes of themes from Psalms 1-2 coming out like this. “Blessed is the one who trusts in you” (84:1). And again in Psalm 86:2, “Preserve my life, for I am godly; save your servant, who trusts in you.” This follows Psalm 1:1’s “blessed is the man.”

The way we will proceed is by first looking at the theme of “walking” in these six songs. Each one has this Psalm 1:1 idea. We all walk in one way or another. So, we will

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<sup>1</sup> Robert Cole, *Message of Book III*, 117, also 25-26.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., 121. Cole sees vs. 6 as this Special Israelite. I rather think his speech begins in vs. 2, with Messiah retreating to the background for a while, as David comes to the foreground in following verses (see below).

consider three psalms that show the walk of the wicked. Are you among those walking in the ways of the wicked? This is something everyone must consider and be prepared to give an answer, for God hates the walk of the wicked, and they will not stand on the day of judgment. Then we will see the three songs that show us the walk of the righteous. What is it like? How does it look? **Why is this important to God?** We will conclude by thinking about this Servant of God, the Anointed or Messiah who embodies all the righteous ways of God, and in whom alone any one of us can find ourselves walking in righteous ways that please the Living God.

## *Walking in Psalms 81-86*

The word for “walk” in Hebrew is *halak*. It is a common enough word, appearing over **1,500 times in the OT**. As we saw, it appears in the first verse of the Psalms, with the man who does not “walk” in the counsel of the wicked. It appears another **29 times in the Psalter** by the time you get to Psalm 80. So, it isn’t like the Psalms haven’t been thinking about this. But what is 1,500 compared to 29? It isn’t exactly a ton. Suddenly, beginning in Psalm 80 (Psalm 84 is really a

continuation of Psalm 80), the word appears in every one of the next seven songs. Why? This is because, as we've said, these psalms were deliberately placed together to contrast the walking ways of two kinds of people. As such, they expound the themes of Ps. 1-2.

### *The Walk of the Wicked in Psalms 81-83*

Psalm 81 begins by looking at the walk of Israel. “I gave them over to their stubborn hearts, to follow [to walk in] their own counsels” (Ps 81:12). “Oh that my people would listen to me, that Israel would walk in my ways!” (81:13). Psalm 82 considers the walking of the heavenly sons of God. “They have neither knowledge nor understanding, they walk about in darkness; all the foundations of the earth are shaken” (82:5). Psalm 83 looks at the walking of the Gentiles. “They say, ‘Come [lit: walk this way], let us wipe them out as a nation; let the name of Israel be remembered no more!” (83:5).

The effect is that no one with moral capacity in heaven or on earth is walking in the ways of the LORD. This is a brutal assessment which the Apostle sums up as, “God has

consigned all over to darkness” (Rom 11:32). “All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God” (Rom 3:23). It reminds us of Psalm 2, “Why do the nations rage and the peoples plot in vain. The kings of the earth set themselves, and the [heavenly] rulers take counsel together, against the LORD and against his Messiah” (Ps 2:1-2). The picture is bleak and frightening, especially when you think about the Triune God laughing in heaven and holding them all in derision. This is not a place you want to be in, for God takes sin deadly serious. This is not the laughter of having fun telling jokes, but of a powerful God about to do away with sin once-for-all.

So, let’s take a look at these three psalms again briefly. The heading in the ESV for **Psalm 81** says it all. *Oh, That My People Would Listen to Me*. Though there is a call to praise God (Ps 81:1-5, it is a worship song after all), it moves into an **oracle against Israel**. God himself speaks for 11 verses (6-16). He basically tells them to remember all the things he has done for them in the past. Good things: I relieved your burden (6); I delivered you (7); I gave you commands not to worship other gods for your own good (9), because only I brought you out of Egypt (10). But the people would not

listen; they would not submit (11). “So I gave them over to their stubborn hearts, to follow their own counsels” (12).

*This* is what God calls “walking” in their own ways rather than his way (13). It is his people, for whom he has done so many good things, rebelling against his commandments in order to do the things they want to do with whomever they want to do them. Thus, it is established up front that **God’s people do not walk in his ways**. But this creates an obvious **tension** that exists everywhere in the Bible. Obviously, some *do* walk in his ways. Yet, the people *do not* walk in his ways. This tension is not resolved in the Bible by ignoring it or pretending one or the other does not exist. It is not resolved by going to the law and yelling it a little louder, as if the problem was merely one of not hearing it clearly enough. No, this psalm and so many other places reveal that even God’s people have a problem that they cannot overcome by themselves. There is only one solution to be found, and it is not found inside yourself.

**Psalm 82** moves to those **heavenly created gods** (**Ps 82:1**) that the Israelites so willfully, joyfully, brazenly walked towards, though it was forbidden (**81:9**). These beings were assigned to the nations as a kind of punishment

for men's rebellion way back before there was even an Israel. And though they were commanded to cause the people to judge justly, not to show partiality to the wicked (2), to give justice to the weak and the fatherless and the afflicted (3), and to rescue the weak and needy (4), they didn't. This is what the word says their "walk" is like. It calls it a "walking about in darkness" where there is no understanding or knowledge and all the foundations of the earth are shaken (5). You must realize that the deities of the pagans are real and wicked and sinister. They hate goodness, the weak, the helpless. In fact, they hate all men and so enslave them to their lusts (cf. Gal 4:3). Earth religions, eastern religions, animistic religions, indeed all man-made religion which the West is so quickly reembracing, are returning with a vengeance and the result is absolute moral darkness. The foundations of the earth shook then. They are shaking again today. Do you not feel the earthquakes all around you, the seismic tectonic fear that has gripped a nation gone mad, and wholly unable to escape the clutches of their own insanity?

**Psalm 83** turns to the only creatures left and able to reason about God: **The Gentiles**. It becomes the low point of the three-song unit. The psalm is a lament against a

coalition of enemies that have come up against the people of God. It begins with a cry for God to act (**vs. 1**). It describes a present crisis (**2-8**), with the enemies making an uproar, raising the heads (**2**), laying crafty plans against God's people (**3**), trying to wipe them out as a nation (**4**), conspiring together in an evil covenant as a confederation of nations that surrounds the Promised Land (**5-8**). It is Armageddon in the OT! But again, this is described as their “**walking**” (**vs. 5**) ways, and as you can see it has as its chief end the obliteration of God's people from the face of the earth.

The effect of the three-song unit is total hatred of God. From willful rebellion against his laws, to turning to wicked fallen angels, to seeking the annihilation of God's people, these are walking ways of all. This does not leave us in a good place. It reminds us that were not God to do something gracious, **Psalm 1:4-5** would happen to all: “**The wicked are like chaff that the wind drives away. Therefore the wicked will not stand in the judgment, nor sinners in the congregation of the righteous.**”

## ***Walking in Psalms 84-86***

It is just here that we begin to read the next set of three songs. And thank God he does not end the book here! Again, each describes a walking. Psalm 84. “They go [they walk] from strength to strength; each one appears before God in Zion” (84:7). You immediately here how the walk has changed. This refers to God’s people who have in their heart the highways to Zion (5). But it begs the question. How did such a desire get in their heart when they were willingly walking in very wicked ways?

The answer begins to unfold slowly. First, in the same song, “For the LORD God is a sun and shield; the LORD bestows favor and honor. No good thing does he withhold from those who walk uprightly” (84:11). Second, Psalm 85’s very curious, “Righteousness will go [walk] before him and make his footsteps a way” (85:13). And finally Psalm 86 says, “Teach me your way, O LORD, that I may walk in your truth; unite my heart to fear your Name” (86:11). Let’s think about these.

We looked last time at **Psalm 84** and saw that this is a psalm about loving the corporate worship of God. For it is here that God’s special presence on earth is to be found (**Ps 84:1**); it is here that true longing of the heart is satisfied (2).

It is here that the young find safety and even the animals of the earth long to be near (3). It is here that people find the blessings of a happy singing heart (4), refreshment and reprieve from the difficult providences of life (6), and growth in grace and strength (*sanctification*; 7), because their strength is in God not themselves (5). Here God hears prayers (8). Here they find their shield as they look upon the face of Messiah (9). Here is the best place in all the world to be (10). Here God is a sun and shield, bestowing favor and honor, withholding no good thing from those who walk uprightly (11).

But why do they walk uprightly? Because they “trust” or have faith in the Lord of hosts (12). And what does it mean to walk uprightly in this song? It means you go to the house of the LORD. That’s the context, and they go together. How so?

You see that is it by faith and not by sight or works or anything else that a person walks uprightly and desires to be near God. Faith is God’s gift to cause a person to walk uprightly, to woo their affection towards him. The imagery of God being a sun to those who walk uprightly means that he not only puts light in the path to keep you from

stumbling in your walk, but he literally is the light of that path. He is the illumination of your walk. Without him, you slide down slippery places into disobedience and, eventually, destruction. And where do you find this light? Where God has promised to be through the Scripture, in his word, in the sacraments, in his church, with his people, when they gather together to worship and praise his Name.

We come to a new psalm, **Psalm 85**. We need to spend a bit longer here, because we haven't looked it before. Like the previous, this is a song *to the choirmaster* or “*for the end,*” therefore it looks forward beyond itself. It is also another of the songs of *the sons of Korah*, the priests who were placed in the temple by God to minister before him.

The song stands as the middle of these three and there is an important reason why. The first half (**vv. 1-8**) is **a lament**. Think about reading Psalm 84 with all of his joy and fulfillment in the LORD, its walking on the path to Zion, only to immediately begin in Psalm 85 with its, “**LORD, you were favorable to your land, you restored the fortunes of Jacob. You forgave the iniquity of your people; you covered all their sin. Selah. You withdrew all your wrath; you turned from your hot anger**” (**Ps 85:1-3**). These **six**

statements (which is often not a sign of good things, for it is one short of seven) cause us to think of Psalm 81's "I gave them over to their stubborn hearts" and earlier psalms even where God will or has sent Israel into exile.

This in turn causes us to think about how God gave them over because they were walking in ways of disobedience and darkness. They needed forgiveness and restoration and so on *for a reason*. These thoughts begin to offer some resistance to what we just read in Psalm 84. For they were not in fact running to the courts and sanctuaries of God to do anything other than spit in his face.

Yet, through faith and repentance in being brought to their knees, God did these six things for his people in the past. 1. He showed them favor or grace. You don't need grace unless you have been bad. 2. He restored their fortunes. The law said their fortunes would turn bad if they rebelled against him. 3. He forgave them. 4. He covered their sins. *Selah*. Pause. It is not possible to stop often enough here. God forgives those who willfully and constantly spit in his face every time they break his laws, thereby mocking the very idea of righteousness which they demand in others. The application is simple. "They" is you.

“They” is me. Obviously, not walking in God’s ways is what needed forgiveness and covering, yet he forgave? 5. He **withdrew** his wrath. 6. He **turned** from his anger. These things he did because of the goodness in him and, obviously, not in them. Therefore, though the psalm recalls their sins and walking in wicked ways, these great acts of God in the past recall that there can be a change and a turning around into paths of righteousness.

Psalm **85:4-7** becomes a **petition** for God to solve the present problem of wickedness by doing the same thing again in the present day. Each new generation must latch onto these promises, for each generation commits their own treason against God, and each needs fresh forgiveness and a reversal of their stubborn rebellious paths. Not just a generation. But you personally. It isn’t good enough to rely on God’s past grace; you are constantly in need of fresh kindness and mercy.

“**Restore us again, O God of our salvation, and put away your indignation toward us!**” (4). The prayer is focused on today (“us”), not on those in the past or future. You have rebelled. I need God to turn away from his wrath.

“Will you be angry with us forever? Will you prolong your anger to all generations?” (5). This promise knows well the Law that God visits iniquity up to the third and fourth generation of those who hate him. But its rhetorical question also knows that he shows love to a thousand generations of those who love him and keep his commandments. So, the words now lead God’s people to sing together for him to help them overcome their own self-imposed judgment, by forgiving them.

The next two verses are similar. “Will you not revive us again, that your people may rejoice in you? Show us your steadfast love, O LORD, and grant us your salvation” (6-7). The people are turning from their sins and begging God to remember his covenant promises that if they should turn from their sins, he is faithful and just to forgive them and restore their happiness again in him. This is how they get back on the road to Zion, having his sanctuaries in their hearts! They acknowledge their sin; they learn again that he is a forgiving and merciful God.

Vv. 8-13 become “a statement of confidence that the loving and faithful God will act.”<sup>3</sup> That this repentance is

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<sup>3</sup> Ryken and Ryken, *The Literary Study Bible*, Psalm 85, p. 843.

done in faith and is not just a way to appease God's wrath is seen in **vs. 8**, "Let me hear what God the LORD will speak." Only **faith** desires to know how God will respond to such things. It then remembers God's promises. "For he will speak peace to his people, to his saints; but let them not turn back to folly" (8). You can hear the echo of **walking** in this verse.

"Surely his salvation is near to those who fear him, that glory may dwell in our land" (9). The glory dwelling is nothing short of the Glory of God himself, his Shekinah cloud, his Holy Spirit who Moses saw descend upon the tabernacle and Ezekiel saw leave it in the days of great judgment. It is quite possible that this psalm is remembering that very leaving, trusting that God will not leave them forever.

He then notices **paradoxical** things about God. "Steadfast love and faithfulness meet," and more famously, "righteousness and peace kiss each other" (10). Something similar obtains in the next verse. "Faithfulness springs up from the ground, and righteousness looks down from the sky" (11). Why are these paradoxical? Because how can God show steadfast love and be faithful to a faithless, sinful,

rebellion people? Even more, how can there be peace between God and man and how can he show his righteousness to those who walk in the way of scoffers? And yet he knows that God has found a way that one attribute will not be compromised so that he can uphold the other. Somehow, God can be both righteous and bring peace to those who have sinned against him.

The psalmist and the people singing come to the penultimate line of the song by remembering the summary of these things, “Yes, the LORD will give what is good, and our land will yield its increase” (12). But it is the final verse that really highlights what I hope you have been hearing the need for an answer: How has God found a way to do these things without compromising himself? The answer, “Righteousness will go [walk] before him and make his footsteps a way” (13).

Can you see the mysteries lurking behind this stunning verse? It is a rather cryptic statement and scholars argue about whether it refers to the steps of a righteous follower of God or to the steps of God himself. But why do we have to choose? For there is One Righteous Follower who is himself the True Israelite, who also happens to be very God

of very God. If read Messianically (see **Ps 84:9; 86:6**), it makes perfect sense. The Righteous One will literally walk before God, allowing both righteousness and peace to kiss because he is God in human flesh. Without him, there can be no such matchmaking.

**This brings us to Psalm 86.** It is curiously, the only song not of the sons of Korah between 84-88. More curiously, it is one of the rare **psalms of David** in this part of the psalter. David, as the king's anointed, represents not only the people to God, but in this capacity represents God's Anointed (that is, Messiah) to the people. Thus, the author as the anointed rather than a gatekeeper in the temple becomes vital.

The psalm begins in a familiar refrain: **"Incline your ear, O LORD, and answer me, for I am poor and needy"** (**Ps 86:1**; cf. **10:17; 17:6; 31:2; 45:10; 49:4; 71:2; 78:1**). But it takes an immediate right turn, one that always causes brings consternation to people who do not know how to read the Psalms with Christ as the Singer. **"Preserve my life, for I am godly; save your servant, who trusts in you-- you are my God"** (**84:2**). Do you sense the problem? Based on all we have seen today, **what man is godly? None**, which is why

even the Jews before Christ read things like this with anticipation of someone else to come.

We hear echoes in these words all kinds teachings of Christ who is the “Servant” of God, the only inherently godly man. “The Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many” (Mark 10:45). “I am meek and humble in heart” (Matt 11:29). “My God, My God” he cried (Matt 27:46). “Take this cup from me” (Luke 22:17). “He trusts in God; let God deliver him” (Matt 27:43). This is why scholars say that here in these three songs, there is someone else coming to the forefront, someone in the future who has not participated in the evils of these people. David simply does not fit the bill. Only Messiah does.

That said, the cries of pleading continue, but now the Messiah seems to retreat into the background for a moment. Remember, there are two authors of any single psalm. “Be gracious to me, O Lord, for to you do I cry all the day” (Ps 86:3). “Lord” here is Adonai, and it is the word David usually uses not for the Father, but for the Son (cf. Ps 110:1). Is he praying to Christ? “Gladden the soul of your servant, for to you, O Lord, do O lift up my soul” (4). But why is he

downcast? With Big Messiah, it is because the sins of others are heaped upon him. For little messiah, it is because of his own sins. Hence, “For you, O lord, are good and forgiving, abounding in steadfast love to all who call upon you” (6). David as a godly man is a sinner. Christ as a godly man, is not. And this is just what you need, and, what I believe these psalms read (especially) together point to.

A confession comes next, apparently from David. “There is none like you among the gods, O Lord [Adonai], nor are there any works like yours” (8). This is a clear and unmistakable confession that is rooted in the songs of Moses about the Angel of the LORD. “The LORD [Yahweh] is a man of war ... Who is like you, O LORD, among the gods? Who is like you majestic in holiness, awesome in glorious deeds, doing wonders?” (Ex 15:11; cf. Deut 32:37), and it falls right in line with David’s understanding again in Psalm 110:1, that Adonai is the Son of God. He is compared to the other gods (sons of God or angels, see Ps 82:1, 6), *but there is no comparison*. None of them is like him in their nature or essence, and therefore none of them can do anything like what he can do. How much more when he comes to earth as a man to accomplish our salvation?

“All the nations you have made shall come and worship before you, O Lord, and shall glorify your Name” (9). The NT takes passages like this and teaches that every knee will bow and every tongue will confess that Jesus Christ is Lord to the glory of God the Father (Php 2:10-11).

Returning again to Moses and the Angel of the LORD it says, “For you are great and do wondrous things” (Ps 86:10). Yet putting it together with the Shema since there is a Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, “... you alone are God” (10). The OT, without question, believes in a plurality of a single Godhead. It is fully Trinitarian. This is not a NT invention. That’s the language of the texts themselves.

It is in light of this confession of who God is now, and of his past and coming wonders in Christ, that we come to the “walking” verse in this psalm. “Teach me your way, O LORD, that I may walk in your truth; unite my heart to fear your Name” (11). Do you see how walking in the ways of Yahweh has to be accomplished by Yahweh? Do you see how it is accomplished by being united in heart to the Name, that is Christ (“Messiah”)? This, then, is how the Psalms move from all walking in disobedience to God’s people now walking in obedience through fear and faith in the LORD.

It is God's work in them by the power of the Word through the Gospel that he is kind and gracious and full of steadfast love and compassion. And it is being proclaimed to you this very moment. This word is the power of God to save you.

With such a glorious thought, this then becomes the refrain of the remainder of the song: “I give thanks to you, O Lord my God, with my whole heart, and I will glorify your Name forever. For great is your steadfast love toward me; you have delivered my soul from the depths of Sheol” (12-13). David has not died, and yet it is as if he will not perish. Why? Because he now has eternal life in the Son of God. How? Because God in his forbearance did not kill David, but through faith credited to him the righteousness of Christ whom He knew He would deliver—the very Son of God—from the grave by resurrection from death. David would not see Sheol because Jesus did and overcame it!

“O God, insolent men have risen up against me; a band of ruthless men seeks my life, and they do not set you before them” (14). This verse returns to the walking of the wicked and their disdain for God's people. But more, it shows us exactly what Luke tells us the Apostle's preached about Jesus. “This Jesus, delivered up according to the definite plan

and foreknowledge of God, you crucified and killed by the hands of lawless men. God raised him up, loosing the pangs of death, because it was not possible for him to be held by it” ([Acts 2:23-24](#)). And again, “Truly in this city there were gathered together against your holy servant Jesus, whom you anointed, both Herod and Pontius Pilate, along with the Gentiles and the peoples of Israel, to do whatever your hand and your plan had predestined to take place” ([Acts 4:27-28](#))

The song concludes, “But you, O Lord, are a God merciful and gracious, slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness. Turn to me and be gracious to me; give your strength to your servant, and save the son of your maidservant. Show me a sign of your favor, that those who hate me may see and be put to shame because you, LORD, have helped me and comforted me” ([15-17](#)). **What is that sign?** “Comfort, comfort my people, says your God. Speak tenderly to Jerusalem, and cry to her that her warfare is ended, that her iniquity is pardoned” ([Isa 40:1](#)). “All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned—every one—to his own way; and the LORD has laid on him (the Suffering Servant) the iniquity of us all” ([Isa 53:6](#)).

Friends, I plead with you one and all. I beg you to trust in Christ and do it now. There is no time to delay. The urgency of this has been felt. God is angry with the wicked every day. Apart from Christ, you are wicked.

You do not know what will become of you even in the next hour. Last week, while we were worshiping God here in this building, a similar sized group of Christians were doing the same in Sutherland Springs, Texas. A town of no repute or importance. A congregation of no standing or large size.

While they worshiped, most of them were mowed down by a crazed gunman, yet another icon of a civilization now walking firmly in the darkness and depravity Psalm 84 spoke about. Infants shot at point blank range. Little girls pleading for their lives. Teenagers. Senior citizens. Strong, healthy powerful men. It didn't matter. Theirs lives were snuffed out in a moment. They had no idea this would be their last seconds on earth.

Men fear the shaking of the foundations of the earth. They fear gunmen. They fear guns. But it doesn't stop them from embracing ever increasing insanity of trying to solve a problem that only God through the gospel can solve. They

are chasing after the wind. Their solutions become more and more ridiculous. Because they fear men and not God. “Do not fear those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul. Rather, fear him who can destroy both soul and body in hell” (Matt 10:28).

In this way, we come back to the beginning. The psalms have been teaching you to walk in the ways of the LORD, lest you be destroyed with the wicked. They have taught you from the very beginning that you can only do this by kissing the Son, lest he be angry and you perish in the way.

Why kiss him? Because this Son is “The Man” who alone does not walk in the counsel of the wicked, nor stand in the way of sinners, nor sit in the seat of scoffers. And he proved it by dying a worse death than those in Texas, because he was fully innocent and went there willfully, knowingly, deliberately that God might look upon you through his sacrifice and be forgiven of your sins. Now, the middle Psalms of the middle book of the Psalter are begging you to remember that which you saw at first.

The only way to walk in righteousness is by the grace of the One True God, The Word made flesh, who humbled himself by taking on our human nature, emptying himself by

taking the form of a servant, being in the likeness of men. Humbling himself in obedience to the point of death, even death on a cross, the most cruel of horrible of death the Romans could devise; the most cursed form of death God could speak about (**Gal 3:13**).

All **so that** you might become those who walk on the highways of Zion with the love and joy *and peace* of God in your hearts (**Ps 84**). All **so that** you might walk humbly in the way of constant forgiveness and repentance for your sins as God in Christ Jesus has found a way for righteousness and peace to kiss (**Ps 85**). All **so that** you might ever seek the aid and help of the Righteous Godly Man who knew all the temptations you know, even to the point of shedding his own blood, but without sin, that his works and ways would find their way into your heart and body, your feet and hands and mouths (**Ps 86**). All **so that** you might praise his Name. That you might aid his mission. That you might walk in the paths of righteousness for his Name's sake, and for your own delight in a merciful, gracious, loving, God who did not show you the kind of wrath and anger that your sins deserve, but poured that out of his Son, so that you could have eternal happiness and joy in Him.