

Enjoying the Privileges of Corporate Worship

In Psalm 84 the Psalmist is enjoying the privileges of corporate worship and begins by singing, “how **amiable** are thy tabernacles, O LORD of hosts!” True worship of the Lord effects a man’s heart, mind, and soul.

The word amiable means dear, or beloved. The Psalmist was in love with Christ and this is expressed in his worship. If you love Christ then you will worship Christ. It is in corporate worship especially that Christ draws near to his people. According to verse 1 the Psalmist loved to worship the Lord in the tabernacles.

The temple of extraordinary beauty which Solomon built was not yet constructed. The *tabernacles* in verse 1 refers to the tabernacle of Moses. What made the tabernacle lovely was not the outside, which was very mean. The tabernacle was lowly, more suited to pilgrims than to a great people, and little becoming of a king.

The tabernacle consisted of a tent-like structure covered by rug-like coverings for a roof, and an external courtyard. The whole compound was surrounded by a high fence about 7 feet in height. The fence was made of linen hangings held by pillars.

But the real beauty of the tabernacle was within, having many golden vessels and furniture such as the Brazen Altar, Laver, Lamp-stand, Table of Showbread, Ark of the Covenant etc. which was typical of things much more precious namely the redemption of sinners by Jesus Christ.

A commentator observes, “A tabernacle was a mean habitation, but the disadvantage of external circumstances makes holy ordinances not at all the less amiable; for the beauty of holiness is spiritual, and their glory is within.”

The Psalmist describes here in Psalm 84 the privilege of worship. Sadly, there are times when we forget about the great privilege of worship, and we find it hard to worship the Lord and going to church can become dry, dull, and dead. Do you find worship to be more of a burden than a privilege to you? Men, women, young people, can you honestly say with the

Psalmist, “how **amiable** are thy tabernacles, O LORD of hosts!” Do you love to be in the house of the Lord to worship and adore Christ?

We all need to remind ourselves that the privileges we enjoy today in the worship of God came at a very high price. Christ humbled himself and became the God-man in the Incarnation. He lived a perfect life of obedience to the Will and Law of God; a perfect life we could not live. He died the shameful death of the Cross for the sins of His people; a death we deserved to die. He rose again from the dead on the third day and now sits at the right hand of God the Father where He makes intercession for His people. What a work of redemption accomplished for His people! What a privilege we have today to worship the Lord in the beauty of holiness.

Unlike some countries today, we enjoy the privilege of worshipping in a country where there is freedom to worship Jesus Christ. We need to pray for our brethren who are persecuted for the cause of Christ around the world. May the Lord forgive us of taking lightly the privileges of worship we enjoy in this country.

The title of my message is, *Enjoying the Privileges of Corporate Worship*. The privileges we enjoy now in corporate worship will be realized in a fuller and greater sense when we enter into our future, glorious worship in heaven with Christ. There are four points I would like to make this evening.

1. We enjoy the privilege of worship by sitting under the Means of grace.

The Means of grace are instruments that God uses to convert sinners and bless His people. The reading and preaching of the Word, praying made to the throne of Grace, and the Spirit of grace are important aspects to our corporate worship. What a privilege to come into God's House and sit under the Means of Grace.

We read in Ephesians 5:19, "Speaking to yourselves in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord."

Colossians 3:16, "Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom; teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with **grace** in your hearts to the Lord."

A theologian writes, “Breathing is the means that God uses to sustain life. So the command to breathe is the command to fall in with the purposes and patterns of God to give and sustain life. This is what I mean by the term, 'means of grace.' 'Grace' is the free keeping-work of God to sustain our spiritual life that leads to everlasting joy. The "means of grace" is our 'keeping ourselves in the love of God.' God's 'keeping' inspires and sustains our 'keeping.' His keeping is decisive and our keeping is dependent on his.”

We enjoy the privilege of worship by sitting under the Means of grace.

2. We enjoy the privilege of worship by meeting in a designated place.

Read verse 3.

The Psalmist describes the happiness of the little birds that made their nests in the buildings that were adjoining to God's altars. The sparrow has found a house and the swallow a nest for herself.

A commentator writes, “These little birds, by the instinct and direction of nature, provide habitations for themselves in houses, as other birds do in the woods, both for their own repose and in which to lay their young.

The Psalmist supposes the sparrows were in the buildings about the courts of God's house, and wishes himself with them. The Psalmist would rather live in a bird's nest near God's altars than in a palatial house at a distance from them. He desires the wings of a sparrow, that he might fly undiscovered into God's courts.

The Psalmist envies the happiness not of those birds that flew over the altars, and had only a transient view of God's courts, but of those that had nests for themselves there. The Psalmist will not think it enough to sojourn in God's house as a way-faring man that turns aside to tarry for a night; but let this be his rest, his home; here he will dwell.

Notice that these birds not only have nests for themselves there, but they lay their young there as well.

Those who have a place in God's courts themselves cannot but desire that their children also may dwell in God's house, and within his walls, and have a place and a name.

The Lord has blessed the congregation in Prince George with a permanent place to worship Christ. What a privilege to have a designated place for worship. The building meets our needs and is used for the glory and praise of Christ.

Let us continue to pray for the work in Victoria that the Lord would bless them with a permanent building of their own.

We enjoy the privilege of worship by meeting in a designated place.

3. We enjoy the privilege of worship by fellowshiping with God's people.

We read a word of exhortation in Hebrews 10:25, "Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is; but exhorting one another: and so much the more, as ye see the day approaching."

Albert Barnes writes, “This verse refers to public worship. The Greek word for *assembling* is used nowhere else in the New Testament, except in 2Th 2:1, where it is rendered *gathering* together. It properly means an *act* of assembling, or a gathering together. The command, then, here is, to meet together for the worship of God, and it is enjoined on Christians as an important duty to do it. It is implied, also, that there is blame or fault where this is "neglected."

Paul strongly urges and exhorts the Hebrew Christians to be steadfast in their corporate worship of God. That is, in our assembling together--a direction which proves that it is proper for Christians to exhort one another when they are gathered together for public worship.

Indeed, there is reason to believe that the preaching in the early Christian assemblies partook much of the character of mutual exhortation.

The church patriarch Ignatius says, “When ye frequently, and in numbers meet together, the powers of Satan are overthrown, and his mischief is neutralized by your like mindedness in the faith.

To neglect such assemblings together might end in apostasy at last.”

The Psalmist is exhorting us to enjoy the privileges of corporate worship. We do this by sitting under the Means of grace; by meeting in a designated place; and by fellowshiping with God’s people.

4. We come now to the most important of all. We enjoy the privilege of worship by exalting our God and King, Jesus Christ.

Read verse 3.

Charles Spurgeon writes in *The Treasury of David*, “My King and my God. Here the Psalmist utters his loyalty from afar. If he may not tread the courts, yet he loves the King. If an exile, he is not a rebel. When we cannot occupy a seat in God's house, he shall have a seat in our memories and a throne in our hearts. The double "my" is very precious; he lays hold upon his God with both his hands, as one resolved not to let him go till the favour requested be at length accorded.”

The privilege of worship is to be found in having access to Almighty God through Jesus Christ.

Christ is the Way to the Father. We read in John 4:23-24, “But the hour cometh, and now is, when the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth: for the Father seeketh such to worship him. God is a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth.”

Christ describes the true worshippers of God. All who truly and sincerely worship God do it with the heart, and not merely in form.

In spirit. The word spirit, here, stands opposed to rites and ceremonies, and to the pomp of external worship. It refers to the mind, the soul, the heart. They shall worship God with a sincere mind; with the simple offering of gratitude and prayer; with a desire to glorify him, and without external pomp and splendor. Spiritual worship is that where the heart is offered to God, and where we do not depend on external forms for acceptance.

In truth. Not through the medium of shadows and types, not by means of sacrifices and bloody offerings. In the true way of direct access to God through Jesus Christ.

The Father seeks worshippers. Jesus gives two reasons why this kind of worship in spirit and in truth should take place.

One is that God desired it. He had appointed the worship in the Old Testament, but he did it because he sought to lead the mind to himself even by those forms and types, and to prepare the people for the purer system of the gospel, and now he desired that those who worshipped him should worship him in that manner of spirit and truth. He revealed his will of worship by Jesus Christ.

We enjoy the privilege of worship by exalting our God and King, Jesus Christ.

In closing, the Psalmist is enjoying the privileges of corporate worship. And so must we! We enjoy the privilege of worship by sitting under the Means of Grace; by meeting at a designated place; by fellowshiping with God's people; and most importantly, by exalting our God and King, Jesus Christ. May the Lord help us to view worship as a privilege and blessing from Christ. Let us pray!